



Perspectives on Youth Participation in Northern Ireland

Irwin, T., Hansson, U., Morgan, C., & Boyd, G. (2015, Jun 30). Perspectives on Youth Participation in Northern Ireland. UNESCO Centre, Ulster University.

[Link to publication record in Ulster University Research Portal](#)

Publication Status:

Published (in print/issue): 30/06/2015

Document Version

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

General rights

Copyright for the publications made accessible via Ulster University's Research Portal is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

The Research Portal is Ulster University's institutional repository that provides access to Ulster's research outputs. Every effort has been made to ensure that content in the Research Portal does not infringe any person's rights, or applicable UK laws. If you discover content in the Research Portal that you believe breaches copyright or violates any law, please contact pure-support@ulster.ac.uk.

UNESCO Centre

Multidisciplinary Centre
for Research on Children and Youth



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



UNESCO Chair in Education for Pluralism,
Human Rights and Democracy
Northern Ireland

UNESCO Centre at Ulster University

June 2015

CYP the children
and youth
programme

Perspectives on Youth Participation in Northern Ireland



Preface

This report edited by the UNESCO Centre at Ulster University is the result of a series of conversations on the current status of youth participation in Northern Ireland and the opportunities and challenges that exist and the opinions and experiences of groups of young people who are often marginalised or hard to reach. In particular, as part of the November 2014 ESRC Social Sciences Festival, the UNESCO Centre hosted a public seminar to discuss this issue with an interested and diverse audience. Each of the organisations who have contributed to this report also took part in the event. The report reflects many of the issues raised at the seminar and we are grateful to all those who so freely gave of their time and expertise to deliver their perspectives on youth participation in Northern Ireland. Importantly, the voices of youth who took part in focus groups to discuss their experiences of participation are embedded throughout the text.

The UNESCO Centre Children and Youth Programme aims to provide research and commentary on issues addressing the rights and well-being of children and youth in Ireland and Northern Ireland. All outputs from the Programme correspond with three key UNESCO aims:

- to strengthen awareness of human rights;
- to act as a catalyst for regional and national action in human rights; and
- to foster co-operation with a range of stakeholders and networks working with, or on behalf of, children and youth.

The focus on youth in this Report reflects the definition used by the United Nations,

spanning the age range 15-24 years and, reflecting this, the terms youth and young people are used inter-changeably throughout.

The Children and Youth Programme adopts a rights-based approach to policy development and implementation, with the intention: to retain academic independence and to ensure the voice of children and youth is present. The Programme aims to meet a series of key objectives for each publication. These are to:

1. focus on a topical issue considered to affect the well-being of children and youth;
2. examine the impact of selected policy and practice interventions on human rights and well-being;
3. gain an understanding of the processes of implementation;
4. share learning that will enable duty bearers to better meet their commitments to children's rights and improved well-being;
5. share learning that will enable rights holders to claim their rights.

A common theme which permeates Programme reports is education. The right to education is firmly established in international law and is crucial for the exercise of other rights. Education reinforces, integrates and complements a variety of other Convention rights and cannot be properly understood in isolation from them.

In doing so, the Report reflects the UNESCO position that education is a universal inalienable human right which plays a critical role in the development and empowerment of every child, regardless of their gender, age, race and mental and physical abilities.

Contents

Preface	2
Foreword.....	5
1.0 Introduction	7
2.0 Participation.....	9
2.1 The Rights of Youth.....	11
3.0 Demographic Overview.....	13
3.1 General Profile	13
3.2 Community Background.....	13
3.3 Qualifications	14
3.4 Economic Activity	15
3.5 Political Participation	15
3.6 Looked After Young People.....	19
3.7 LGB Issues	20
3.8 Youth Justice	21
4.0 The Participation of Youth in/Leaving Care	23
4.1 Overview	23
4.2 What are the Challenges for Youth In Care/Leaving Care?	23
4.3 The Education of Youth In/Leaving Care.....	24
4.4 Improving Chances for Participation.....	25
4.5 Key Messages.....	26
5.0 The Political Participation of Young Women	28
5.1 Overview	28
5.2 Young Women Living on the Edge of Politics and Participation	29
5.3 Radicalising Young Women Towards Democracy, Peace and Participation.....	30
5.4 Key Messages.....	32
6.0 The Participation of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual (LGB) Youth	34
6.1 Overview	34
6.2 Education in Northern Ireland	35
6.3 Education Policy and Sexual Orientation.....	35
6.4 Sexuality in the Northern Ireland Curriculum.....	36
6.5 Key Messages.....	37
7.0 The Economic Participation of Youth leaving the Youth Justice System in Northern Ireland ..	39
7.1 Introduction	39

7.2	Context.....	39
7.3	The Role of Education	40
7.4	How can the Youth Justice System Improve the Economic Participation of Young Offenders?	41
7.5	Key Messages	41
8.0	Concluding Comments	44
	Bibliography	45

Table of Figures

Figure 1: Northern Ireland Population.....	13
Figure 2: Community Background	14
Figure 3: Qualifications	14
Figure 4: Economic Activity, 16-24 Years	15
Figure 5: Interest in Politics	16
Figure 6: Voting in Elections.....	16
Figure 7: Involvement in Volunteering	17
Figure 8: Gender in Political and Public Life	18
Figure 9: Interest and Knowledge of Politics	19
Figure 10: Destination for Looked After Children and Young People.....	19
Figure 11: VOYPIC Service Users	20
Figure 12: Attitudes Towards LGB People	20
Figure 13: Prison Receptions Principal Offence - Male.....	21
Figure 14: Young People in Custody by Age	22
Figure 15: YJS Involvement by Age	22
Figure 16: The Maze Model of Prison Education.....	43

Report Authors: Ulf Hansson, Catherine Morgan, Gavin Boyd, Tracy Irwin

Series Editors: Una O'Connor, James Dillon

Reviewer: Chris Quinn, Northern Ireland Youth Forum

Foreword

Chris Quinn, Director, Northern Ireland Youth Forum



I am delighted to write the foreword to this very interesting and thought provoking research

report. I can see huge potential for it to be used by practitioners and policy makers routinely.

Over the past two decades we have seen significant positive developments in terms of youth participation in the decision making process. Legislative developments such as the UNCRC; the appointment of a Children's Commissioner; Section 75 legislation and Junior Ministers with responsibility for children and young people have helped to provide a rights-based and legislative basis within which youth can have a say on issues that affect them.

In addition, we have a plethora of existing and emerging policy and strategy documents which demonstrate that the participation of youth is not only important and right but it is also a must.

Unfortunately, at times we can see where the rhetoric does not always match the reality. This report highlights the barriers faced by youth, in particular those in or leaving care; young women; those who are lesbian, gay or bisexual; and those leaving the justice system. It is very well to support, advocate for and/ or write participation into policy strategy and action plans – but it's a very different thing to ensure that it is implemented and truly supported. The onus is on our government departments and

policy makers to ensure that the culture of participation is true and meaningful. It is important that participation has meaning so that youth feel connected and in control – as advocated by Wierenga (2003).

A recurring theme in this report is the importance of education. Related to this the authors have also highlighted a deficit in relation to rights awareness amongst youth and the role that the education system can play in relation to this. Many of the commentaries reference the need for igniting the fire in the bellies amongst the particular constituent groups. Some of the statistics provide interesting reading in that they demonstrate young people's interest in democracy but also their disconnect from politics and, arguably, participative democracy and social justice.

I strive towards living in a society where participation in civic society is a way of life. I want my children to grow up in a society where their views are not only promoted, but listened to and most importantly - acted upon. The benefits of participation are well documented – at personal, peer, community and societal levels.

Having spent the last decade focusing primarily on youth participation I have had the pleasure to work with some amazing young people and colleagues. There are many outstanding projects at community, regional, national and international levels as well – as significant policy developments referenced already. However, the absence of a regional (NI) Youth Assembly is a stark omission from this particular jigsaw.

If we put the pieces together and recognise that we live in a society where young people under the age of 18 cannot vote for those

who make legislation that affects them, where policies are often written without youth in mind, and where austerity measures disproportionately affect them, it is perhaps not surprising that many youth face significant barriers to participation.

Youth Participation is a right. Young people require support and education to exercise this right – particularly those who face barriers. The onus is now on our policy makers to listen and act upon this research to further enhance the voice of youth in the decision making process.

Chris Quinn
Northern Ireland Youth Forum
June 2015

www.niyf.org

1.0 Introduction

There is no universally agreed definition of *youth*, *young adults* or *young people* and so the terms are often used inter-changeably to depict a variety of age ranges. For example, the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) refers to youth as being aged 15/16 to 29 years (2015); similarly the European Union (EU) (2009) refers to 15-29 year olds as *young people*; whilst the United Nations (UN) definition of youth spans the age range of 15-24 years¹. Reflecting the rights-based approach adopted by the Children and Youth Programme (CYP), this report adheres to the UN definition of youth.

Approximately half of the world's population is under the age of 25 (UN, 2011). Nationally, youth aged 16-24 years account for 12% (7.4 million) of the population in the United Kingdom (UK).² In Northern Ireland, just over 30% of the population is under the age of 25, with just under 14% of the total population in the 15-24 age bracket³.

Whilst representing a sizeable proportion of the population, the youth of today face a myriad of challenges. Arguably, the most significant of these has been the economic downturn which has impacted in a variety of ways. Some youth have sought to prolong their education to maximise job prospects, others have returned to live in the family home, whilst an increasing number are not in education, employment or training (NEET). Collectively, these circumstances have postponed the transition into adult life, with the independence and responsibility that this confers, creating instead a sub-population who are potentially excluded and disengaged from society (Eurofound, 2014). At the same time, negative stereotyping in the media and

wider public domain has inevitably led to prevailing frustration and distrust amongst youth, exacerbated by a common perception that their views are not taken seriously by politicians and decision-makers (Birdwell and Bani, 2014; Eurofound 2014; Council of Europe 2012).

The youth of today are tomorrow's parents, civic leaders, employers, workers and politicians. As a constituent group, then, youth in Northern Ireland occupy a singular position on the cusp of adulthood that enhances their potential to actively and independently inform and influence decisions affecting them. In this regard, the situation of youth in wider society is integral to a culture of growth and change.

At the same time, youth are not a homogenous group; differences for example, in gender, ethnicity, religion, (dis)ability, family background, social circumstances and sexual orientation can influence the nature, extent and quality of their participation in civic life. This report will use a series of critiques to examine youth participation in Northern Ireland in a range of contexts. In the context of this report, youth participation is grounded in the principles and practice of citizenship, personal development and active involvement in society. Using the individual lens of participation, the experiences of a range of groups of youth: young women and political participation, barriers facing youth in/leaving care; youth in/leaving the youth justice system and employment; and LGB youth being acknowledged within the education system, will be explored. Each critique will outline the particular situation of each group, identify current barriers to wider participation in society, consider the contribution of formal and non-formal education and make recommendations for policy.

¹ www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/human-rights/about-human-rights

² http://www.ukyouth.org/resources/youth-statistics/item/292-statistics-about-young-people-in-the-uk#.U6woG8lg_IU

³ http://www.nisra.gov.uk/census/key_report_2011.pdf

The report is framed around the following objectives:

- 1) To consider the concept of youth participation;**
- 2) To consider policies for youth and youth participation in Northern Ireland;**

- 3) To provide a demographic profile of youth in Northern Ireland;**
- 4) To explore youth participation in Northern Ireland from a range of perspectives;**
- 5) To provide reflections on policy and practice with regards to youth participation.**

2.0 Participation

Participation is often referred to as a multi-layered concept and the development of different theoretical models illustrates that it is not a linear process. Hart's (1992) interpretation of the incremental nature of participation has been widely endorsed and used as a normative framework to inform successive approaches (for example, Head, 2011; Shier, 2001; Treseder, 1997), including models that were adapted to the particular circumstances of participants (Tisdall and Liebel, 2008). More recently, the emergence of alternative approaches (for example, Brodie et al., 2009) has suggested categories of participation - individual, social and public – that fuse in an inter-dependent civic identity. In this instance, individual participation⁴ that includes *'...the choices and actions that individuals make as part of their daily life and that are statements of the kind of society they want to live in'* is presented as the precursor to wider social⁵ and public⁶ activism. Elsewhere, terminology such as *associational involvement* (Ekman and Amnå, 2012), *citizenship participation* (Yeung et al., 2012) and *political participation* (Benton et al., 2008) essentially reiterate the societal and civic nature of many current approaches (Flanagan and Christens, 2011).

This is reflected in international policy. For example, the World Bank (2006), the United Nations Development Programme (2012) and Innovations in Civic Participation (2010) have highlighted participation as integral to a healthy transition to adulthood *'...in which people participate to improve the well-being of communities or society in general, and which provide opportunities for reflection'* (UNICEF, 2010, p.vi). The European Union, in its Youth Strategy (2010-2018), referred to

youth as active citizens and participants in society (European Commission, 2009), whilst the Council of Europe's Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life (2003) framed participation in a social policy context, where *'... having the right, the means, the space, and the opportunity, and where necessary the support to participate in and influence decisions and engaging in actions and activities ... to contribute to building a better society'* (CoE, 2003, p.7).

Locally, recognition of the value of youth participation is aligned with longstanding need to maximise efforts to facilitate and support it (NCB, 2010). The Ten Year Strategy for Children and Young People stated its intention to *'... embed a culture of engaging with children and young people and involving them in decision-making'* (OFMDFM, 2006, p.27); similarly, Priorities for Youth: Improving Young People's Lives through Youth Work (DE, 2013) proposed a focus that would meet the needs and aspirations of young people whilst strengthening their potential as decision-makers. Most recently, the Northern Ireland Youth Forum (2013)⁷ endorsed participation as *'...a structure that brings together children and young people regionally, sub regionally or locally to participate as decision makers. It does not have to be a formal structure, any way of involving children and/or young people in governance, planning, management or decision-making is considered a participative structure.'*

The rationale for youth participation is represented in terms of rights, empowerment and self-efficacy (Rhys Farthing, 2011) that incurs both individual and wider social benefits (Head, 2011; Haste, 2005). The individual benefits of participation are well documented and include traits such as positive identity, enhanced confidence and self-esteem as well as improved social,

⁴ Includes activities such as donations to charity, buying fair trade goods, community help

⁵ Includes activities such as volunteering, membership of community groups, attendance at local meetings

⁶ Includes activities such as voting, standing for political office, taking part in demonstrations and protests, signing petitions, campaigning and lobbying

⁷ <http://www.niyf.org/2013/12/02/participative-structures-audit/>

communication and critical thinking skills (Head, 2011; Sinclair and Franklin, 2000). Other research has demonstrated a positive correlation between youth involvement in decision-making and improved service provision (Checkoway, 2011; Cavet and Sloper, 2004; Kirby et al., 2003). Notably, this has included marginalised groups - for example, disabled youth (Beresford, 2002) and those in the youth justice system (Hart and Thompson, 2009). Social impact (Checkoway, 2011; Sherrod, et al., 2010; Zeldin et al., 2003), not least in the generation of social capital (Flanagan and Levine, 2010; Field, 2008; Putnam, 2000), has also been widely identified.

Although the connected benefits of youth participation have been noted (Head, 2011; Franklin and Sloper, 2007; Lansdown, 2001; Sinclair and Franklin, 2000), evidence also suggests enduring barriers that are wide-ranging, encompassing negative stereotyping, cultural and social norms as well as apathy on the part of youth themselves (Shukra et al., 2012; McCready, 2011; Checkoway, 2011; Children's Law Centre, 2010; Brodie et al., 2009; Poole, 2005). Collectively, these often manifest as limited input and influence, with youth opinion restricted to passive and/or tokenistic input on marginal issues (Checkoway, 2011; Middleton, 2006; Kirby and Bryson, 2002; Fitzpatrick et al., 1998; Lansdown, 1995) or steered by pre-set adult agendas (Podd, 2010; Hart 1997). It is perhaps inevitable, then, that a *democratic deficit* has been identified amongst youth who report little trust in elected politicians, political institutions and political processes and who are sceptical and disillusioned about the difference their involvement would make (Kahn et al., 2009; Youth Citizenship Commission, 2009).

Integral to this is acknowledgement that existing structures and approaches are not always universally accessible (Macpherson, 2008), and vulnerable or hard to reach groups, such as socially excluded youth can be eclipsed by the voice of those already actively involved (Head, 2011; McCready, 2011;

McNeish and Newman, 2002; Kirby and Bryson, 2002; Cutler and Frost, 2001). Research has identified that groups of youth, such as LGBT and ethnic minorities who are exposed to homophobic and racist attitudes, practice and policies are effectively alienated from genuine participation, empowerment and inclusion in society (LGBT Youth Scotland, 2011; Head 2011; SALTO 2011; McGinley and Grieve, 2010; ETI, 2009). Efforts have been made to redress this. For example, the Support, Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities Programme (Salto Youth)⁸ emphasised youth as a diverse group who face a range of obstacles – social (sexual orientation, disability, addiction, broken families), economic (unemployment, homelessness and low standard of living) educational (learning difficulties, early school-leavers and school dropouts, lowly or non-qualified persons) and cultural (immigration, ethnicity and language and culture) – and recommended increased efforts to raise awareness of these.

Undoubtedly, formal and informal education is pivotal in facilitating and supporting participation and youth workers, youth leaders and teachers play an important role in equipping young people with the basic confidence and skills to participate in a positive and worthwhile manner (Checkoway, 2011; Head, 2011). A classroom climate in which students openly and actively discuss issues that pertain to individual, social and public life (Kinlen et al., 2013; Campbell, 2006; Torney-Purta et al., 2002) can foster a culture of democratic participation that is continued into adult life (Hoskins et al., 2009). In this regard, it is imperative that such empowerment encourages input beyond formal education and a set curriculum so that participation becomes '*a state of mind as to*

⁸<https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/inclusion/inclusionforas/inclusionstrategy/inclusiondefinition/>. SALTO-YOUTH.net is a network of 8 Resource Centres working on European priority areas within the youth field. It provides youth work and training resources and organises training and contact-making activities to support organisations and National Agencies within the frame of the European Commission's Youth in Action programme and beyond.

why one should participate' rather than focused on the acquisition of 'a learnt set of skills' (McCready, 2011, p.11).

2.1 The Rights of Youth

United Nations human rights treaties are intended to protect citizens. As an over-arching framework, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights⁹ (UNDHR) (1948) establishes the rights of individuals across all age ranges, whilst the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child¹⁰ (UNCRC) provides substantive provisions for an age group considered to need additional protections. The youth population occupies an intriguing position within and across human rights standards. For example, the additional protection of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) recognises the particular status of children as a vulnerable group where the fulfilment of their rights is often dependent on the actions of others (DCYA, 2014). The substantive rights and provisions of the UNCRC apply to anyone under the age of 18 years and so represent an additional layer of protection for some youth (Lansdown, 2011), whilst those aged 18 and over are encompassed within the universal rights of adulthood. Interestingly, policy for children and young people in other jurisdictions encompasses a wider age range to include youth. In Ireland, the national policy framework for children and young people¹¹ applies to everyone up to the age of 25. In Wales, a review of the office of Children's Commissioner recommended that the office was re-named Children and Young People, with a remit that also extended up to 25 years (Shooter, 2014). Notwithstanding the substantive provisions of these instruments, certain vulnerable and/or marginalised groups have fared less well than others due to inequality, exclusion and discrimination based on age, gender, colour and (dis)ability, resulting in range of treaties that provide further protection. In these

instances, other over-arching instruments encompass the youth population by offering additional provision for specific populations from birth to old age. These include, for example, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities¹² (CRPD), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination¹³ and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women¹⁴ (CEDAW).

The UNDHR¹⁵ and the UNCRC¹⁶ endorse the right to participate; this includes the right to express views freely, freedom of expression, the right to participate freely in cultural life and the arts, the legal and moral right to participate in matters and decisions affecting individuals as well as the right to freedom of association. A rights-based approach to youth participation can empower young people, not least those who are oppressed or marginalised groups in society, to have greater control over their lives and meaningful input on decisions affecting them. The voice of youth, including their full participation in the structures and processes that govern them, can therefore improve both efficacy and efficiency in terms of services provided for youth as well as assist in their personal and social development during the transition to adulthood.

Notwithstanding the range of provisions and protections that human rights instruments individually and collectively provide, there has been some debate on the merits of a dedicated Convention for youth, with youth rights separate from children's rights (Desmet, 2012). This has been informed, in part, by the recognition that as a population they straddle several Conventions with the resulting perception that the *'... needs of youth can be under-exposed and marginalised by their complexity'* (UNICEF, 2010, p.ix). Research has reinforced this perspective, where it is argued that realisation of the rights of older children do not always receive adequate

⁹ <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>

¹⁰ http://www.unicef.org.uk/Documents/Publication-pdfs/UNCRC_PRESS200910web.pdf

¹¹ http://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/cypp_framework/BetterOutcomesBetterFutureReport.pdf

¹² Ratified by the UK in 2009

¹³ Ratified by the UK in 1969

¹⁴ Ratified by the UK in 1986

¹⁵ Articles 20, 21, 27 and 29

¹⁶ Articles 12, 13, 15 and 31

attention due, in part, to shifting definitions and provisions that do not *'... fit well with the current needs and expectations of young people'* (Desmet, 2012). In contrast, alternative arguments to strengthen the rights of youth by extending the UNCRC to include those over the age of 18 is seen as potentially weakening of the rights of younger children. Instead, it is proposed that *'the prospects and potentials of a middle ground should be explored, in which there is extensive interaction and cooperation between children's rights policies and youth policies, without both policies being necessarily completely integrated, as the latter entails the risk of one policy becoming to a greater or lesser extent absorbed by the other'* (Desmet, 2012, p.14).

In summary, youth are citizens now, and as equal citizens within society they participate through a variety of means and contexts. The involvement and inclusion of youth as fully

contributing members of society, able to influence decisions and bring about change in broader civic life is an important objective for a democratic society. As highlighted above, youth are not a homogenous group and, for some, there are challenges for meaningful and active participation. This is explored in the following sections in relation to particular groups of youth:

- Youth in or leaving care
- Young women and politics
- Lesbian, gay and bisexual youth
- Youth leaving the justice system

Written by professionals who work directly with these youth, each critique identifies some of the challenges to participation, considers the role of formal and informal education to enhance participation and highlights key messages for policy.

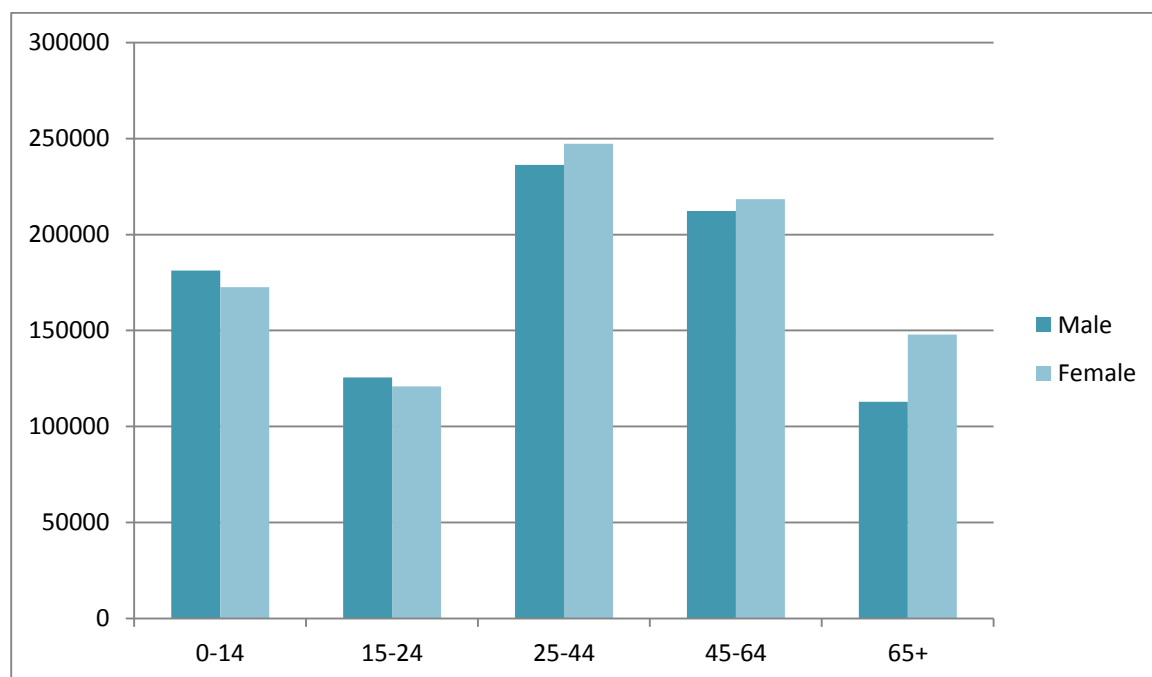
3.0 Demographic Overview

3.1 General Profile

In Northern Ireland, just over 30% of the population is under the age of 25, with just under 14% of the total population in the 15-24 age bracket¹⁷.

Females make up the greater proportion of the population (906,976 in comparison to 862,211 males). In the 15-24 age brackets, the balance is reversed, with 125,606 males and 120,894 females¹⁸.

Figure 1: Northern Ireland Population



(NISRA)

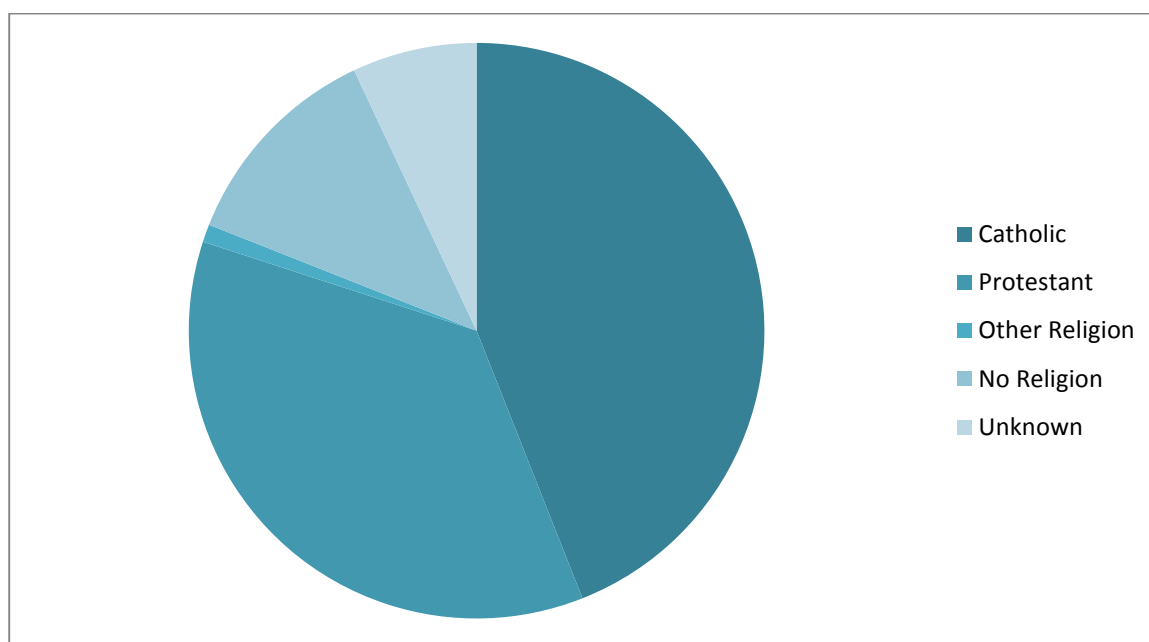
3.2 Community Background

Data reveals that the highest proportion of youth is from a Catholic background (44%), with a slightly lower proportion (36%) from a Protestant background. Twelve per cent of youth identify as having no religion; 1% identifies as other religion and 7% is unknown.

¹⁷ http://www.nisra.gov.uk/census/key_report_2011.pdf

¹⁸ <http://www.ninis2.nisra.gov.uk/public/Theme.aspx>

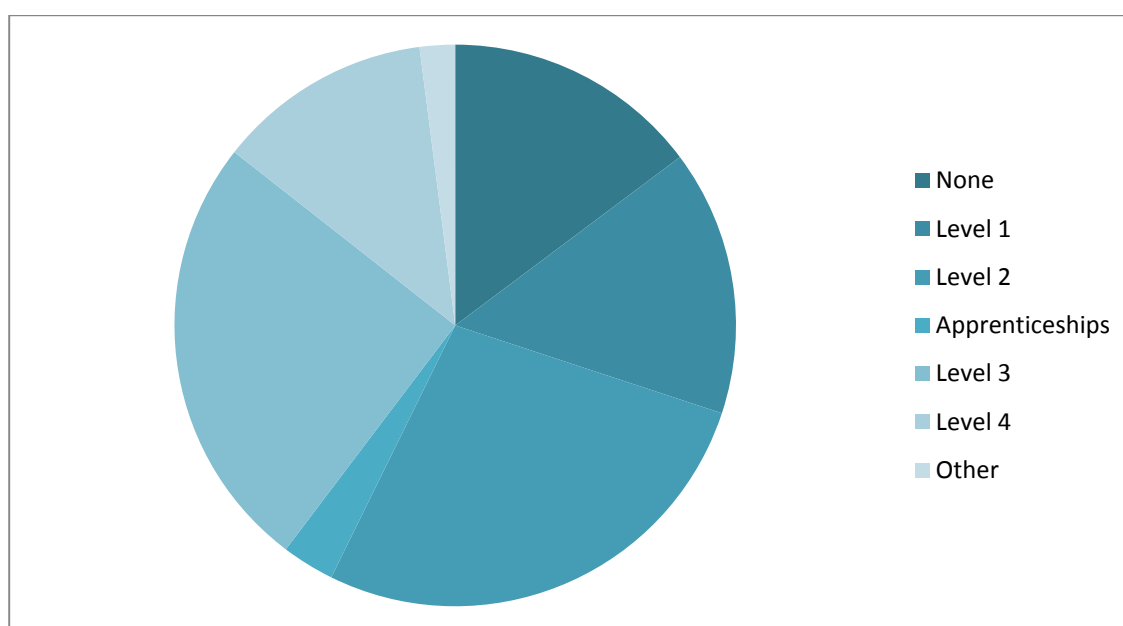
Figure 2: Community Background



3.3 Qualifications

Data indicates that the highest proportion of youth has a Level 2 qualification (27%), with a quarter having a Level 3 (25%) qualification. Fifteen per cent of youth has a Level 1 and a slightly smaller proportion (14%) has no qualification whilst a minority (3%) have an apprenticeship. Twelve per cent of youth has a Level 4 qualification.

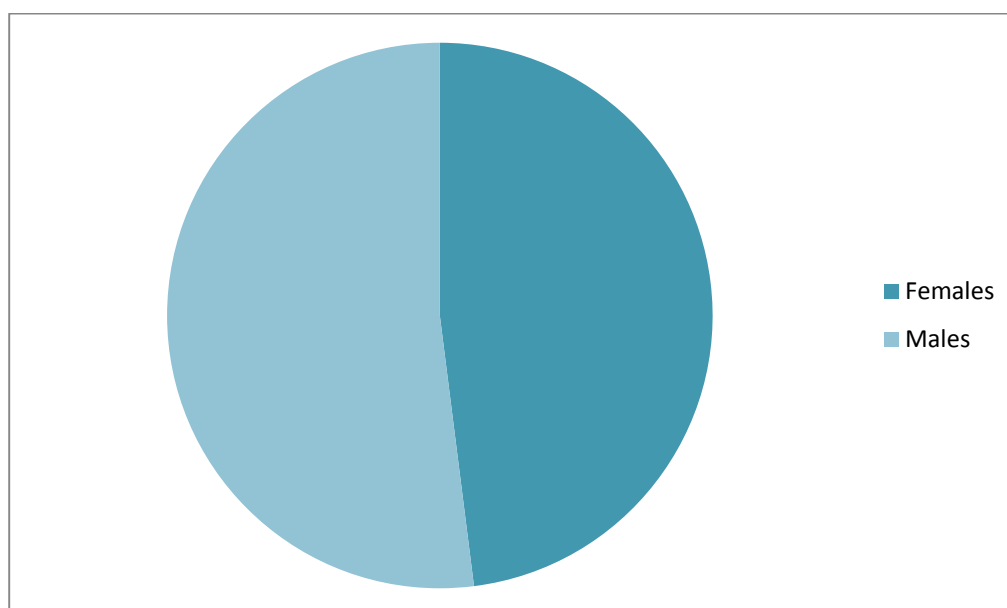
Figure 3: Qualifications



3.4 Economic Activity

Overall, data shows that in the 16-24 age bracket, the proportion of males who are economically active (52%) is slightly higher than for females (48%). A breakdown of this reveals that in the 16-19 age bracket, the number of economically active females is slightly higher than for males – 51% in comparison to 49%. This trend is reversed in the 20-24 age bracket, with 53% of males economically active compared to 47% of females.

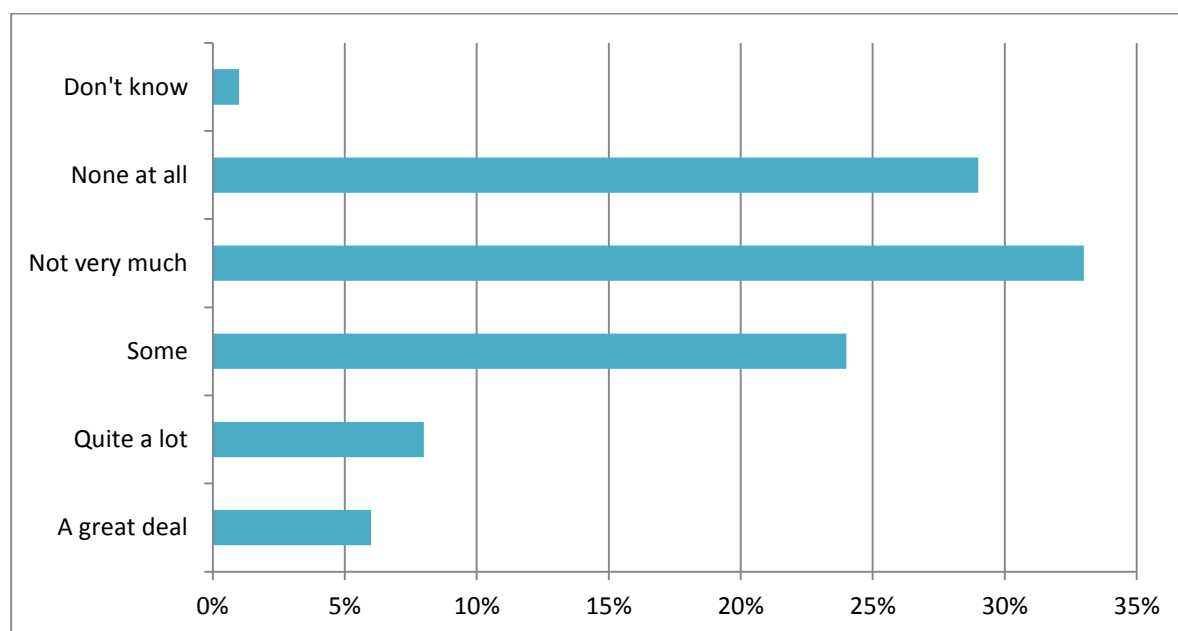
Figure 4: Economic Activity, 16-24 Years



3.5 Political Participation

With regards to politics and political participation, an analysis of the 2011 Assembly Election (Garry, 2012) highlighted the low turnout amongst younger voters. Data from the Life and Times survey (2009) revealed that three quarters (75%) of 18-24 year olds had very little or no interest in politics whilst the Young Life and Times survey (2011) highlighted that just under two thirds of young people (62%) had little or interest.

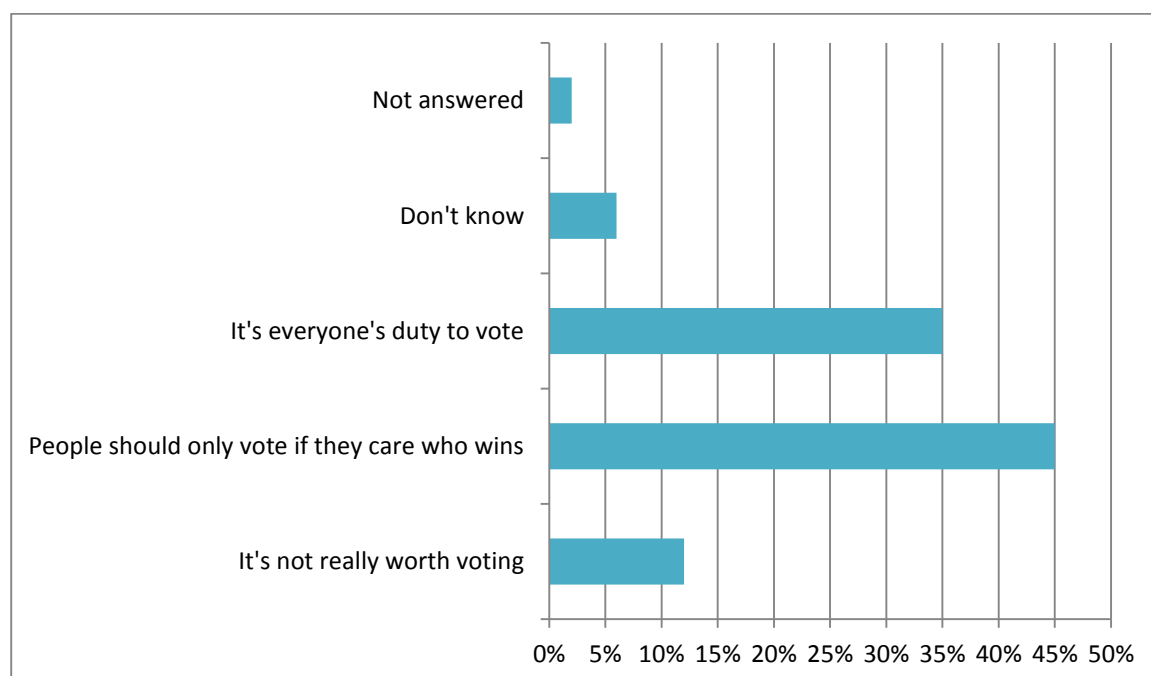
Figure 5: Interest in Politics



(NI YLT, 2011)

Data from the 2010 Life and Times Survey revealed that almost three quarters (72%) of respondents would definitely or probably vote in the next Northern Ireland Assembly election, although this figure dropped to just over half (56%) amongst 18-24 year olds. The Young Life and Times survey (YLT, 2004) indicated more mixed opinions on voting.

Figure 6: Voting in Elections

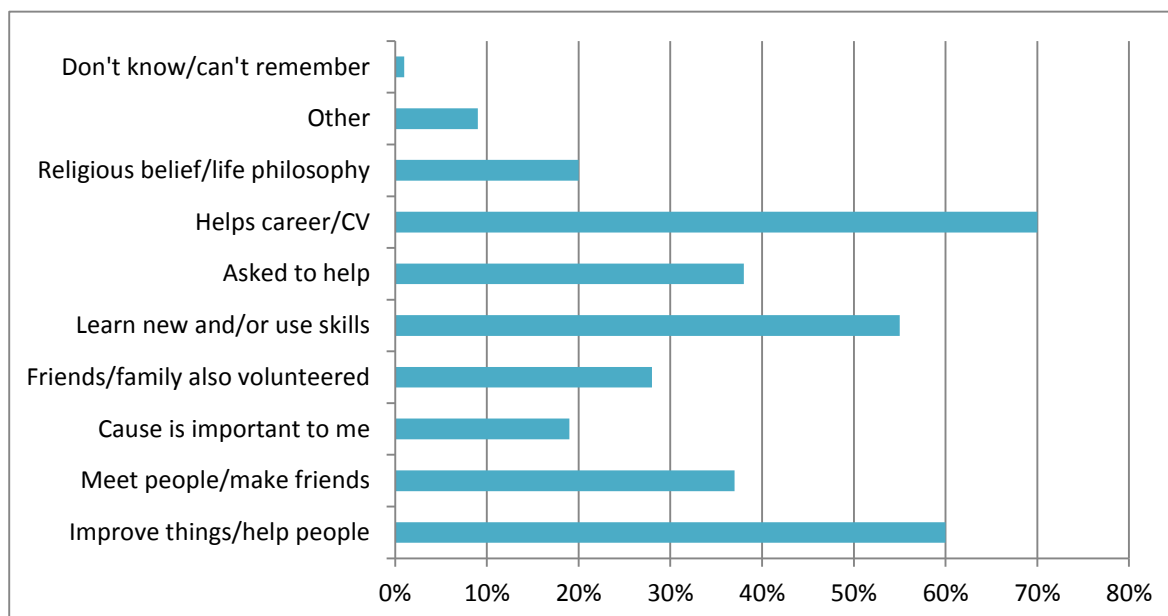


(NI YLT, 2004)

Irvine and Osborne (2014) found that young people aged 16 and over were involved in formal as well as informal volunteering activities and that those who volunteer were more likely to be active citizens. Data from the Young Life and Times survey (2009) showed that just over half (55%) of young

people had volunteered formally or informally in the past 12 months; a majority (70%) of young people identified it in terms of benefits to their career options and/or CV, with a slightly smaller percentage (60%) associating it as a way to help people.

Figure 7: Involvement in Volunteering



(NI YLT, 2009)

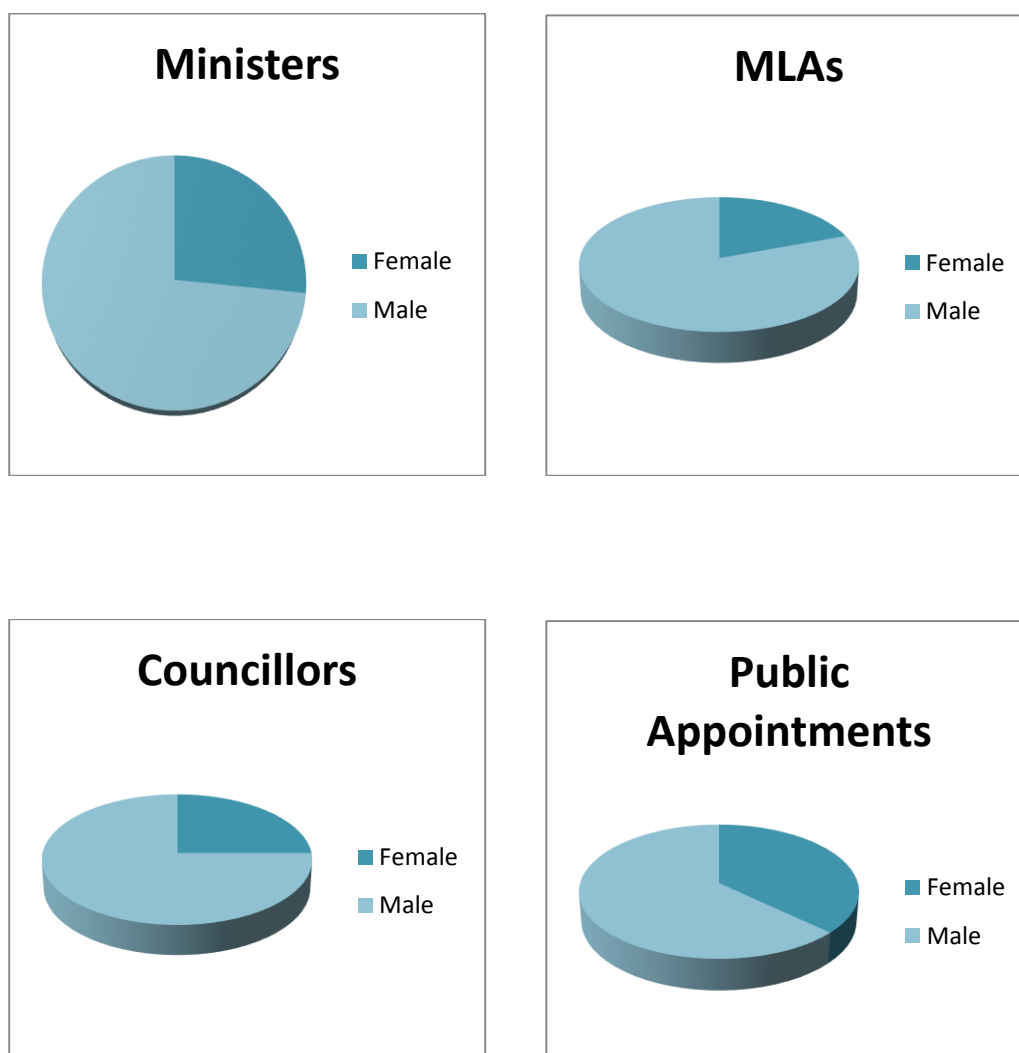
Young people's reasons for not volunteering (YLT, 2009) was largely dictated by the demands of other commitments (58%), although just over a third (38%) indicated they had never thought about it and just under a third (32%) indicated they wouldn't know how to get involved.

More specifically, in relation to young women, statistics¹⁹ reveal:

- 4 of the 15 Ministers and Junior Ministers in the Executive are women;
- Out of the 12 Statutory Committees, there are 3 female Chairpersons and 2 female Deputy Chairpersons;
- In the 2014 local elections to the 11 new councils, out of 462 candidates, 116 (25%) were women;
- 37% of public appointments in Northern Ireland are held by women.

¹⁹ http://www.detini.gov.uk/women_in_northern_ireland_2014.pdf?rev=0

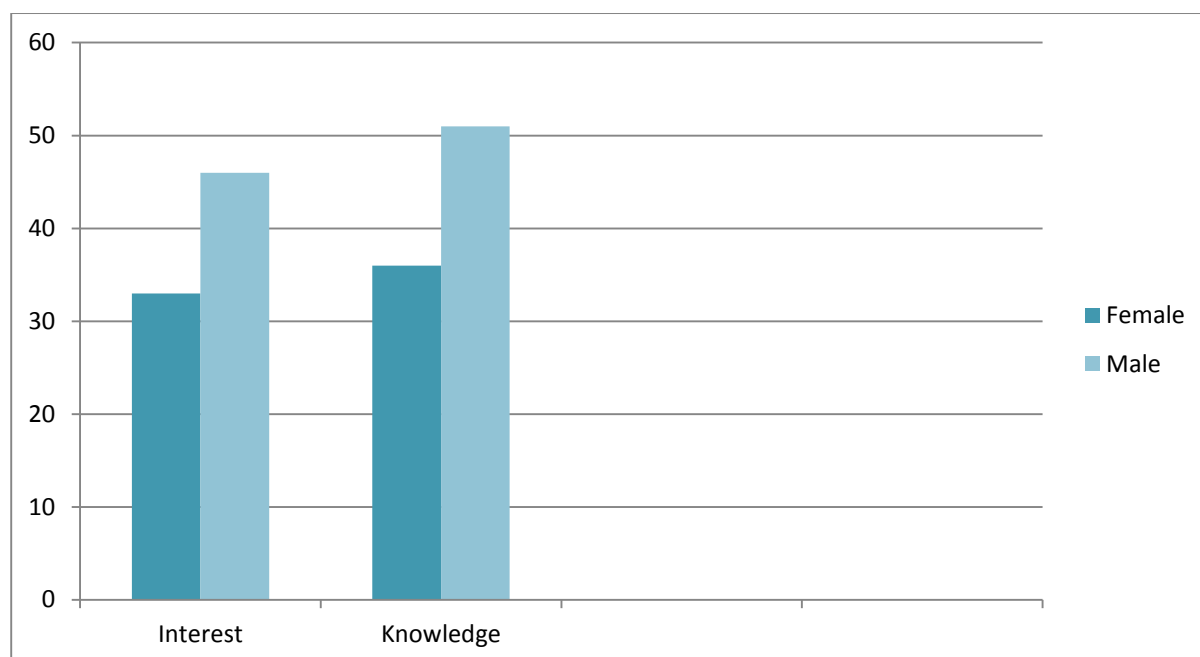
Figure 8: Gender in Political and Public Life



(DETNI, 2014)

Data from the Young Life and Times survey suggests that young women have less knowledge and interest in politics than young men.

Figure 9: Interest and Knowledge of Politics

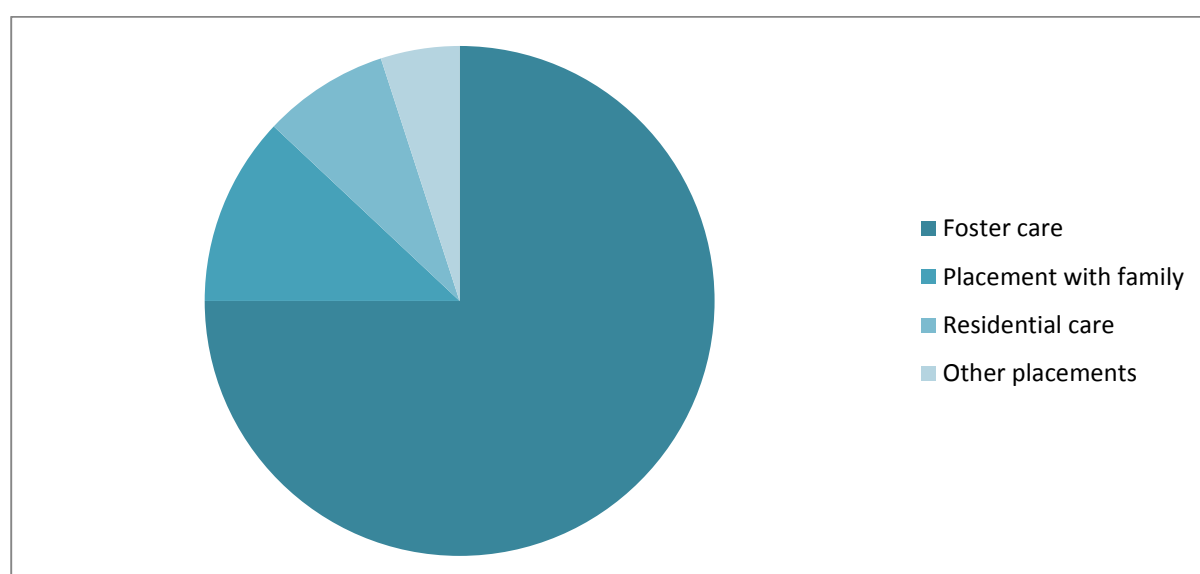


(NI YLT, 2011)

3.6 Looked After Young People

Statistics indicate that the number of looked after children and young people in Northern Ireland has increased from 2,644 in 2012 to 2,807 in 2013. The largest number were in foster care (75%), followed by placement with families (12%), residential care (8%) and 'other placements' (5%).

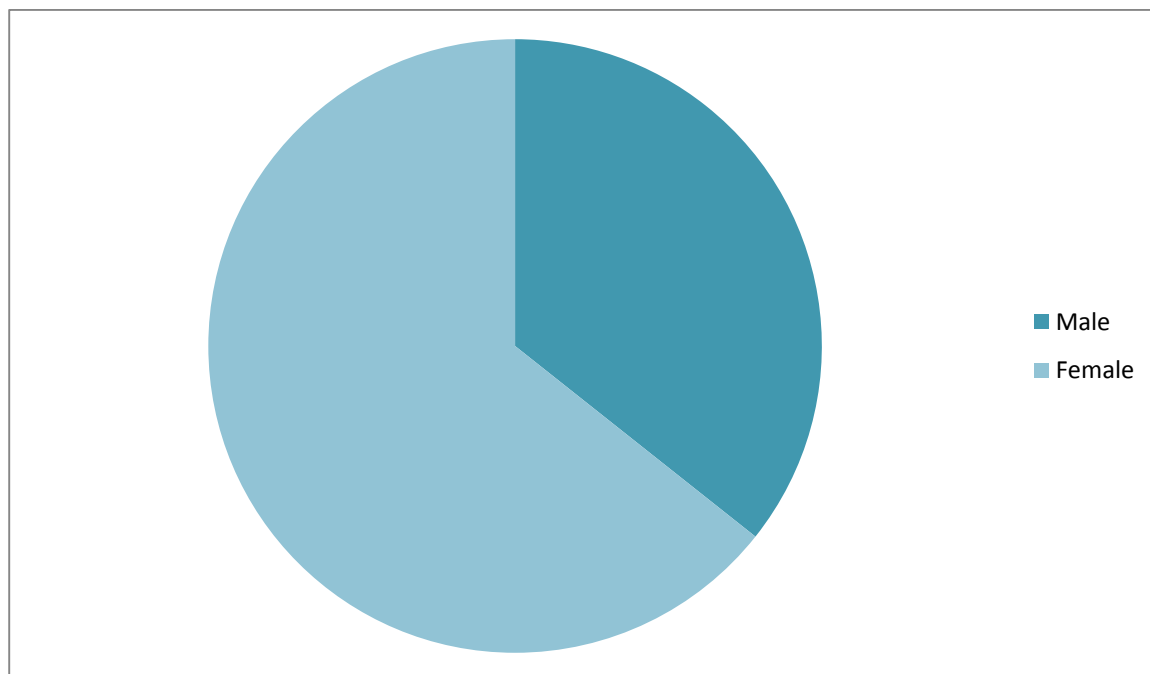
Figure 10: Destination for Looked After Children and Young People



(DHSSPS, 2014)

VOYPIC offers a range of support to children and young people across Northern Ireland. During 2013-14, of the 742 VOYPIC service users, 485 were aged between 16 – 21+ years. Of these, 312 (64%) were female and 173 (36%) were male (VOYPIC, 2014).

Figure 11: VOYPIC Service Users

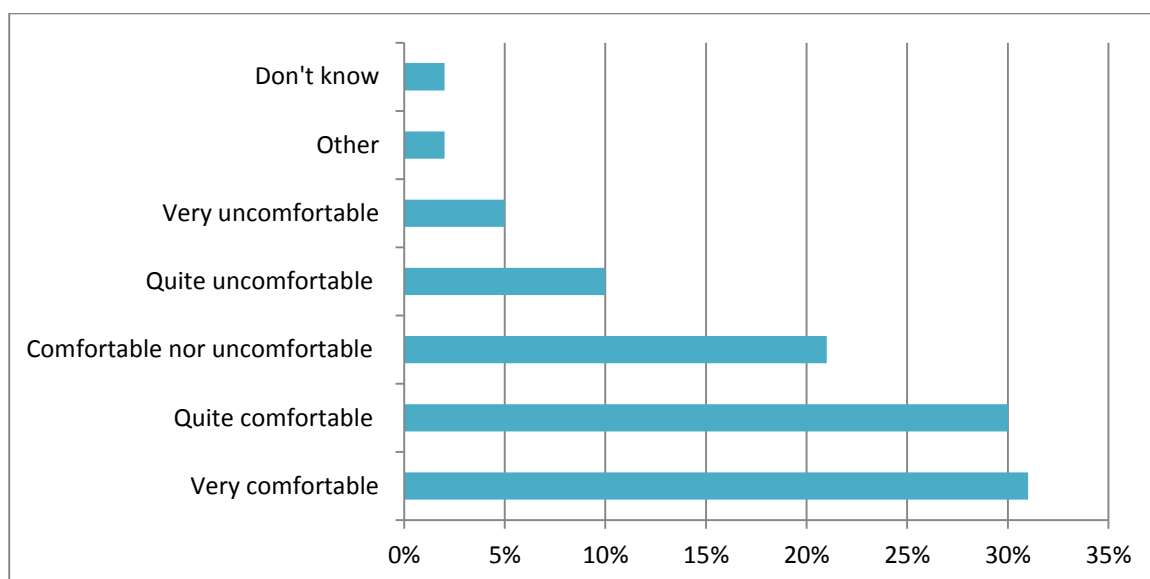


(VOYPIC, 2014)

3.7 LGB Issues

The Young Life and Times Survey (2012) asked respondents how comfortable they felt around people who identified as gay, lesbian or bisexual, just under two thirds (61%) responded that they felt very comfortable or quite comfortable.

Figure 12: Attitudes Towards LGB People



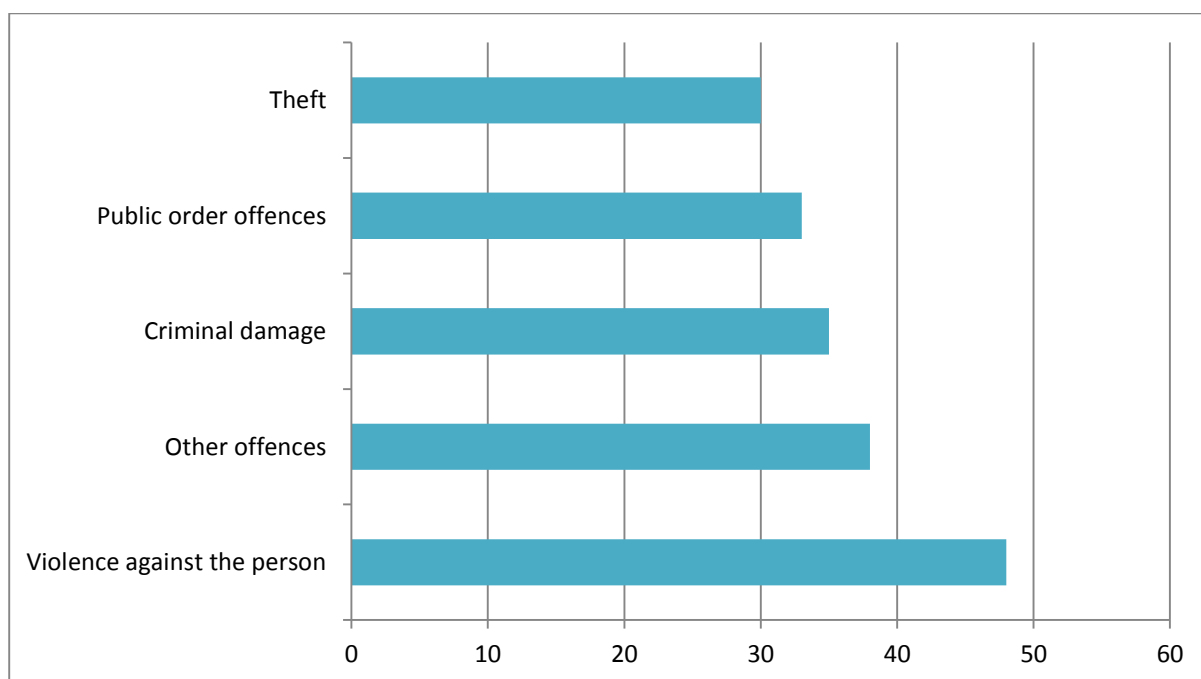
(NI YLT, 2012)

In the Life and Times survey (2013), a majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that gay men and lesbians should be able to express who and what they are as much as anyone else (78% and 84% respectively), with a similar response from young people aged 18-14 (76% and 86% respectively). Half of respondents (50%) in NILT (2013) considered those from the LGB communities were better treated now than they were five years ago, with a slightly higher proportion in the 18-24 age group (52%). However, additional survey data about perceptions of unequal treatment of specific groups compared with other groups reveals that LGB people was the most frequently identified group in 2012 and LGB have consistently been one of the five most identified groups since 2001, with the proportion thinking they have been treated unfairly rising from 18% to 41% in 2009 and 40% in 2012 (Devine, 2012, p 7).

3.8 Youth Justice

In 2013, the largest proportion of prisoners (44%) received into prison under sentence of immediate custody was aged between 21 and 29 years at reception, with a smaller proportion (12%) aged 17-20. Within the 17-20 age group, 81 were male and 1 was female; within the 21-29 age group, 514 were male and 12 were female. Out of 244 young males aged less than 21 years, the principal offences for prison receptions²⁰ under sentence of immediate custody were violence against the person, other offences, criminal damage, public order offences and theft. Out of 8 young females in the same age group, the principal offences were public order offences, violence against the person, criminal damage and other offences²¹.

Figure 13: Prison Receptions Principal Offence - Male



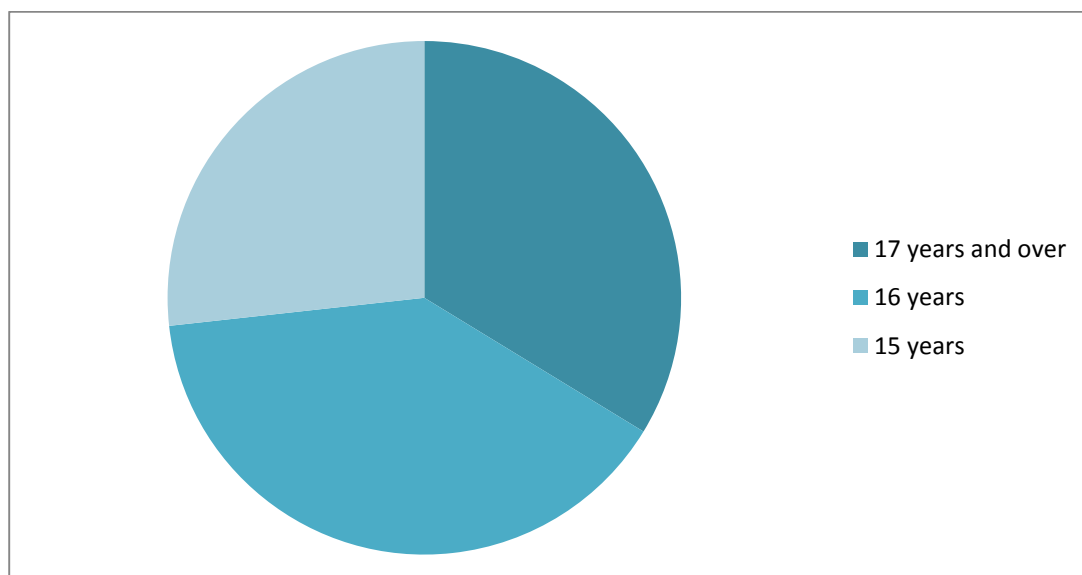
(DOJ, 2014)

²⁰ Some of the tables in the DOJ bulletin refer to adult and young prisoners. An adult is aged 21 years and over and a young prisoner is aged under 21 years.

²¹ A full breakdown of data is available in The Northern Ireland Prison Population 2013. Research and Statistical Bulletin 15/2014. www.dojni.gov.uk

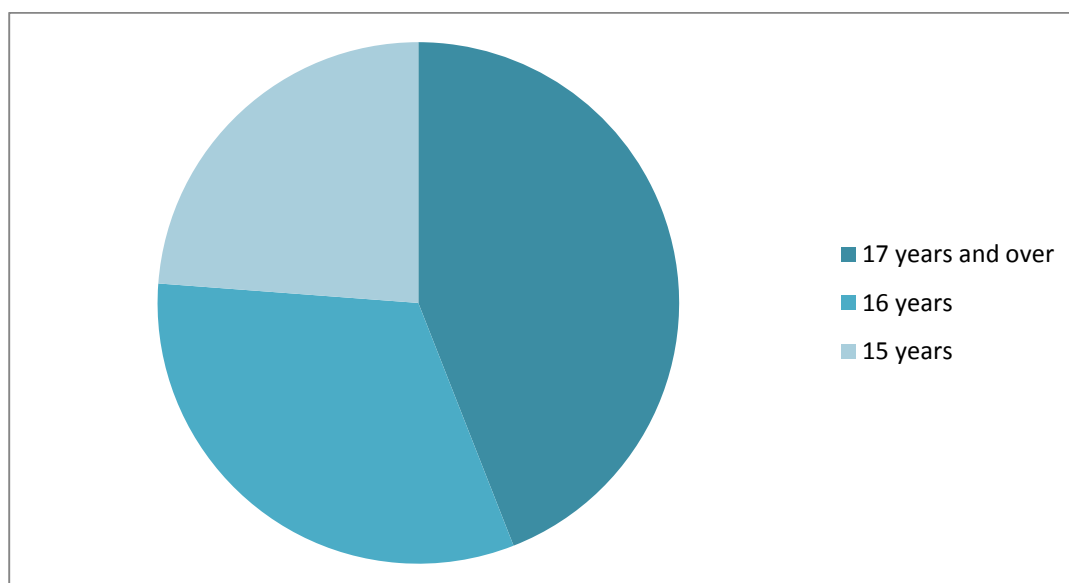
Information on the number of individual young people involved with Custodial Services is updated on an annual basis. Figures for 2013-14 show that less than one-third (29%) of young people in custody were aged 17 and over, a reduction from 42% in 2012-13. In contrast, for the same time period, the proportion of young people in custody aged 16 increased from 26% to 34% and from 18% to 23% for those aged 15.

Figure 14: Young People in Custody by Age



In 2013/14, there were 1,846 referrals to the Youth Justice Agency, involving 977 young people, of whom 83% were male and 17% were female. Information on the number of individual young people involved with YJS on an annual basis (2013-14) show that just over one third (37%) of young people involved with YJS were aged 17 and over, a slight decrease from the 40% in 2012/13. For the same time period, the proportion of young people aged 16 increased from 24% to 27%, and remained the same at 20% for young people aged 15²².

Figure 15: YJS Involvement by Age



²² A full breakdown of data is available in Youth Justice Agency Annual Workload Statistics 2013/14. Statistical Bulletin 3/2014. www.youthjusticeagency.cyni.gov.uk

4.0 The Participation of Youth in/Leaving Care

Dr Ulf Hansson, with input from VOYPIC

Ulf Hansson is a Research Associate in the UNESCO Centre at Ulster University. VOYPIC (Voice of Young People in Care) was established in 1993, its aim is to improve the lives of children and young people cared for away from home. VOYPIC's underpinning vision is that children and young people will have a meaningful voice in all decision making affecting their lives; that their rights will be fully respected and that they will have the opportunity to realise their full potential in whatever they choose to do.

Further Information on VOYPIC can be accessed at www.voypic.org

4.1 Overview

A young person can be in care for a range of reasons; often, it relates to the fundamental decision that it is not in their best interest to live with their birth family. Instead, young people live in a children's home, with non-relative foster carers or with kinship foster carers - a relative or friend. Statistics for Northern Ireland indicate that the number of looked after children and young people in Northern Ireland has increased from 2,644 in 2012 to 2,807 in 2013. The largest number were in foster care (75%), followed by placement with families (12%), residential care (8%) and 'other placements' (5%) (DHSSPS, 2014).

The rights of young people in care are largely addressed through provisions outlined in the UNCRC²³; the absence of these protections for older youth occur at significant transition points when lifestyle and career options are most uncertain, impacting

"When I got a new friend it took me a while before I told them about my past, before I could trust them. Same with the teachers.

on their social integration. Policy and legislation²⁴ in Northern Ireland has identified young people in care as a group at particular risk and has highlighted the importance of stability, permanence and positive attachments to improve their outcomes. As they approach the independence of young adulthood, the influence of these on their social participation assumes a particular significance.

This critique will look at the barriers and challenges facing youth in/or leaving care and how this might impact on their social participation, namely relationships with others as well as education, health and employment options that can enhance integration into wider society.

4.2 What are the Challenges for Youth In Care/Leaving Care?

The social participation of youth in or leaving care can be complex, with a range of emotional, physical and practical issues impacting on their integration with others. Evidence suggests that being in care offers possibilities as well as barriers to social

²³ UNCRC, Articles 3, 9 (para 1), 20

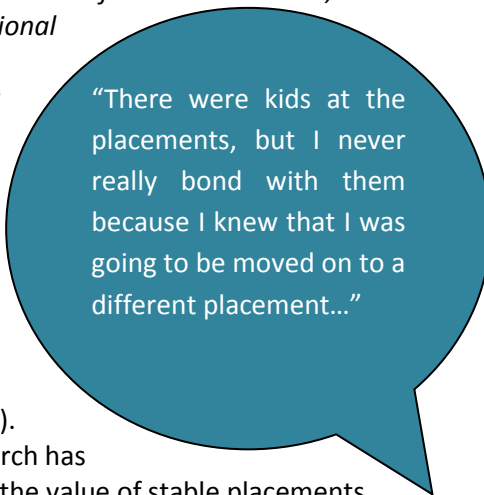
²⁴ For example, The Children (NI) Order (1995); Care Matters in Northern Ireland – A Bridge to a Better Future (DHSSPS, 2007); Fit and Well: Changing Lives 2012-2022 (DHSSPS, 2012); The Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI) was established by the DHSSPS in 2012, with the primary aim to ensure the effectiveness of its member agencies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people.

participation. For example, recreational activities and community involvement can be easier to access outside a difficult home environment (VOYPIC, 2013; Ofsted, 2009; Gilligan, 2007), where the benefits of ‘... *connectedness to non-parental adults*’ can provide young people with ‘... *better outcomes in terms of scholastic success, social-emotional wellbeing, connections to social capital, and risk-taking*’

behaviour’ (Grossman and Bulle, 2006, p 789).

Other research has highlighted the value of stable placements for young people, in particular its positive influence on education and employment outcomes, as well as readiness for independence and more satisfactory social integration moving into adulthood (Barn et al., 2005; Stein, 2012). In contrast, a range of constraints can impact on social participation. These include distant or restrictive placements, limited freedom of movement (VOYPIC, 2013), limitations in up-to-date care plans, and poor access to relevant support and information (Ofsted, 2014; Who Cares? Trust, 2012).

It is well documented that care leavers are over-represented in many statistics, including those for mental health rates, teenage pregnancy, prison populations and homelessness (Jackson and Höjer, 2013; Dixon, 2008, 2006; Stein, 2005). Whilst these facts are not disputed, the one-sided nature of much data has reinforced inaccurate perceptions that perpetuate negative ‘*careism*’ stereotypes often defined in terms of school dropout, drug use and petty crime (The Who Cares? Trust, 2012; Ofsted, 2009). As a result, many youth leaving care choose to hide their background from potential friends, employers and landlords (Barnardo’s, 2006),



“There were kids at the placements, but I never really bond with them because I knew that I was going to be moved on to a different placement...”

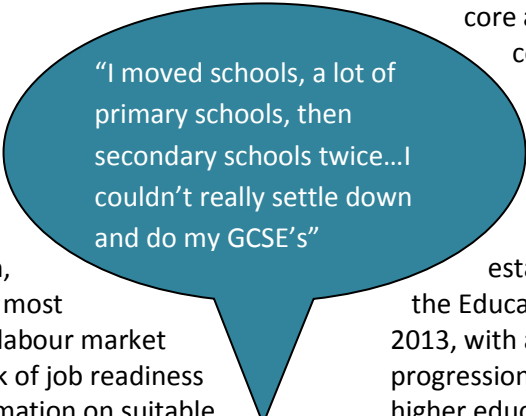
making the process of social participation more difficult. There have been increased efforts to gather the views of looked after young people although this has not been matched by the proportion who considered their views were acted upon (OFSTED, 2014) or who felt they had sufficient advocacy to inform the major changes in their lives (Pona and Hounsell, 2012). In Northern Ireland, young people’s views are taken into account during Looked After Child (LAC) reviews or complaints procedures and VOYPIC, under a commission from the HSCB, has provided a regional, independent advocacy service for young people in the care of the five HSC Trusts; in 2012, the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) commissioned the service for a further five years. VOYPIC has provided individual advocacy support to over 300 children and young people each year. In addition, a monthly visiting advocacy service is delivered to children’s homes and residential units across Northern Ireland.

4.3 The Education of Youth In/Leaving Care

Young people in care are more likely to be excluded from school, have poor attendance rates and lower attainment than their peers (VOYPIC 2013; Cameron and Moss, 2007); they are also more likely not to be in education, employment or training (Dixon et al., 2004). Research by the Northern Ireland Department for Education (DE) (2011) highlighted that attendance and attainment rates are lower for Looked After Children (LAC) on average than for the general school population. In primary schools, LAC had a lower absence rate (3.4%) than those who were not in care (4.4%), although in post-primary schools rates of overall and unauthorised absence were notably higher for LAC than other children (9.7% and 5.6% compared with 6.5% and 2.4%) (DE, 2015). Research has identified a range of interlinked reasons for this, such as placement instability (OFSTED, 2014); lack of access to educational materials, facilities and educational support (Who Cares? Trust, 2012; Harker et al., 2003); indifference to school (VOYPIC, 2013); and

being singled out or bullied (Barnardo's, 2006; Harker et al., 2003).

Young care leavers are almost three times more likely to leave school with no qualifications compared to regular school leavers (DHSSPS, 2014). Research (Jackson and Cameron, 2010) has highlighted the lack of progression of young people in care into further and higher education, often as a result of disrupted primary and post-primary education, low priority of education and poor self-esteem²⁵. Figures for the United Kingdom indicate that the number of care leavers aged 19 who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) has increased by 5% since 2009 and by 26% since 2006 (Reed, 2011). As such, they are amongst the most disadvantaged in the labour market with limited skills, lack of job readiness and inadequate information on suitable employment options (Stein, 2005). In Northern Ireland, less than 7% of young care leavers aged 16-18 are employed in comparison to young people (15%) in the general population (DHSSPS, 2014).



"I moved schools, a lot of primary schools, then secondary schools twice...I couldn't really settle down and do my GCSE's"

Support for the education of young people in care - particularly in relation to self-esteem, learning behaviours and social skills - is an ongoing requirement (Dann, 2011; Barnardo's, 2006). In Northern Ireland, the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) and Department of Education (DE), along with

local Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts have started to address these issues. For example, Personal Education Plans (PEPs) - although not statutory - were introduced to ensure young people in care reach their full educational potential by the DHSSPS and DE in 2011. In 2012/13, 77% of LAC had a PEP but there were variations in the provisions between the various Health and Social Care Trusts, where uptake ranged from 59% in the Northern HSC Trust, to 86% in the Western HSC Trust (Perry, 2014).²⁶ Additionally, a *Pathways into FE/HE for Looked After and Care Experienced Young People* group²⁷ has been established, with a core aim to support timely and connected pathways into further and higher education and through collaborative working practices. In England, higher education institutions and national organisations established the National Network for the Education of Care Leavers²⁸ (NNECL) in 2013, with a commitment to encourage the progression and support of care leavers in higher education by lobbying for improvement of local practice, multi-agency partnerships and national collaboration.

4.4 Improving Chances for Participation

The age at which a young person leaves care is a significant aspect of their social integration, not least in terms of their social, emotional, educational and economic readiness. The average age for leaving home across the United Kingdom is 24, yet for the majority of young people in care, it happens much earlier. In Northern Ireland, the most recent statistics show that of 263 young

²⁵ The research was part of a larger European research project, the YIPPEE project (Young People in Public Care Pathways to Education in Europe) funded by the European Commission and which ran from January 2008 to December 2010. and was undertaken by a team of researchers from Denmark, Hungary, Spain, Sweden and England. This project was designed to identify ways of encouraging - and enabling - care leavers to remain in education after the end of compulsory schooling. The final report of the YIPPEE project: Young people from a public care background: pathways to further and higher education in five European countries, is available on <http://tcru.ioe.ac.UK/yippeee>

²⁶ Perry (2014) refers to the development of a new policy for the education of looked after children being underway and to be out in place for 2015/2016.

²⁷ Group membership includes all HSCTs, both universities, and all FE colleges, the Fostering Network and VOYPIC.

²⁸ National Network for the Education of Care Leavers (NNECL) See <http://services.sunderland.ac.uk/careleaverssupport/nnecl/>

people aged 16-18 leaving care, the majority (81%) had reached the age of 18 (DHSSPS, 2014). Until recently, young people in care had to leave their placement at 18²⁹; however, the introduction and subsequent implementation of the Children and Families Bill gave all looked after young people in England the right to remain with their foster carers until the age of 21³⁰. In Northern Ireland, the Children (Leaving Care) Act (NI) 2002 was adopted to better facilitate the transition of looked after young people into adulthood and independence by providing better support; it introduced the 'Pathway Plan' which includes details on the advice, assistance and support a Health and Social Care Trust (HSCT) intends to provide while the young person is in care and after s/he has left care³¹. Each HSCT is the corporate parent for young people in care, with responsibility to ensure their needs are met through a care plan that is reviewed every six months at a LAC review meeting. The care and pathway plans are central for the effective support of young people in or leaving care and represents the single most practical way to include and engage them in determining important decisions about their life, such as living arrangements and aspirations for the future. There are other options for intervention and support. Children in Care Councils³² (CiCC) are designed for young people to share their experiences of being in care, providing them an opportunity to identify what practices work and where positive change can be made. Almost all Local Authorities (LA) in England and Wales have a

²⁹ http://www.fostering.net/policy-and-campaigns/campaigns/dont-move-me#.U8ZBg8Ig_IU

³⁰ In Scotland, The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 means that from 2015 all 16 year olds in care have the right to stay in care until the age of 21 and in which support is extended to include young people in care who are in education and training up to the age of 26.

³¹ The Act also refers to the introduction of a personal advisor who would ensure that a young person received the support and assistance to which he or she is entitled. See Voypic (2007) Leaving Care? Lost? Your step by step guide to leaving care. <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/young-persons-guide-leaving-care.pdf>.

³² http://www.ncb.org.uk/media/145900/good_practice_guidance_for_children_in_care_councils.pdf

CiCC; there are currently none in Northern Ireland, but VOYPIC is actively lobbying to redress this. Dedicated supported housing³³ is available for some young care leavers aged 16-21, as they make the transition to adulthood and a regional working group facilitated by the Public Health Agency (PHA) has implemented a multiagency action plan to address the health needs of LAC and care leavers³⁴. Elsewhere, the *Going the Extra Mile* (GEM) Scheme³⁵, launched by the DHSSPS, provides practical and financial support so that young people can continue to live with their foster carer post 18³⁶, although there is a lack of similar support for those in children's homes and/or not staying on in education, employment or training. There has been a steady uptake of the GEM Scheme and it is estimated that more than a quarter of care leavers have benefitted from it³⁷ although challenges have been identified in terms of sustainability and the training and support of carers (Stein, 2012).

4.5 Key Messages

The key messages emerging from this critique reiterate some of those identified in the recent VOYPIC manifesto *Do You Care*³⁸?

- **Participation in decision-making: Young people need to be able to participate on issues affecting their**

³³ Jointly Commissioned Supported Accommodation for Young Adults.

³⁴ Includes the HSC Board, Public Health Agency, HSC Trusts and Voluntary Sector as well as representatives from the University of Ulster and Queens University Belfast.

³⁵ GEM is an initiative unique to Northern Ireland which seeks to promote continuity of living arrangements in post care life for young people aged 18 to 21. The scheme ensures that for young people currently living with foster/kinship carers, appropriate and agreed levels of financial support are available to assist carers to continue to meet their care, accommodation and support needs.

³⁶ See <http://www.yourlifeaftercare.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/GEM-Leaflet.pdf>;

<http://www.yourlifeaftercare.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/GEM-BOOKLET.pdf>

³⁷ http://www.fostering.net/news/2010/new-leaving-care-guidance-northern-ireland#.U8wkuMlg_IU

³⁸ *Do You Care? Let's Change the Story for Children in Care.* VOYPIC Manifesto 2013

lives. Whether it takes place informally through involvement in planning and decision-making or formally through the LAC review, this active engagement means young people are listened to on things that matter to them. Children in Care Councils (CiCC) which operate in England and Wales enable young people in care to meet with children's services and other professional staff to share their views and ideas. VOYPIC would like to see similar councils set up in all HSC Trusts.

- **Promote positive images of care:** Being in care can be stigmatising and VOYPIC believes that positive images and messages about children and young people in care need to be promoted in traditional and social media, on TV and in newspapers to challenge negative stereotypes and support school and community integration. It is important that carers, support workers and social workers are supported to promote community engagement of children and young people as a way to increase inclusion in community and society.
- **Support to succeed in education, training and employment:** A good education is integral to improving the life chances of young people, enhancing their options for participation as they make the transition to adulthood, yet looked after children and young people have poorer educational outcomes compared to their peers. Whilst

there has been progress to redress this, through the implementation of PEPS and GEMS, there is scope to develop these further – for example, by monitoring the impact of PEPS and by extending GEMS to include young people living in children's homes.

- **Independence:** The transition to independence and adulthood can be very difficult for young people in care and some may not be ready for this transition at 18. Young people need to feel they belong; successful transition from care to independence reduces the risk of isolation and lack of community support. Equipping young people with the skills for independent living and economic stability requires effective pathway planning, the early support of a Personal Advisor (PA) and multi-agency services.
- **Health and well-being:** The physical and mental health and well-being of young people in or leaving care can determine their capacity to participate as full members of society. Prevalence studies on the mental health of the looked after population have been undertaken elsewhere in the United Kingdom but not in Northern Ireland, although work undertaken by VOYPIC has identified the importance of a comprehensive regional assessment of mental health needs. This represents a significant gap in our knowledge and that should be addressed as a matter of urgency.

5.0 The Political Participation of Young Women

Catherine Morgan

Catherine is the Young Women's Development Worker (Peace Building) for YouthAction Northern Ireland. YouthAction Northern Ireland works with young people to support them as active and equal citizens whose voices are heard, respected and valued.

Further Information on YouthAction Northern Ireland can be accessed at www.youthaction.org

5.1 Overview

A range of international standards³⁹ recognize the right of women to equal and full political participation; these are echoed in local mandates⁴⁰ that highlight the position of women based on the principles of equality and non-discrimination. Arguably, fulfilment of this right is often seen as aspirational and a traditional, male-dominated culture continues to define most political systems, with women often occupying a peripheral position (Harris et al., 2010). Recent census data⁴¹ for Northern Ireland reveals that females continue to outnumber males in the population (925,000 and 889,000 respectively). Yet other international comparative data⁴² on the percentage of women in national parliaments places the United Kingdom (UK) in 57th position, with 148 (22.8%) women, whilst Ireland is placed 85th, with 27 (16.3%) women. In the 2015 Northern Ireland Westminster elections, of the 138 candidates, 33 (24.6%) were female and 105 (75.4%) male. In the Northern Ireland Assembly, out of 108 MLAs, 21 (19.4%) are female⁴³.

"Any time you see politicians in Stormont/Westminster they are all shouting, it reminds you of a primary school playground"

Research has estimated that '... at the current rate of progress it would take sixteen election cycles, about sixty-five years, for women to become 50 per cent of MLAs, and thirteen elections, spanning fifty-two years, to reach gender balance in councils' (Hinds, 2012, p107). This pattern is replicated in local councils, with Northern Ireland having the lowest representation of women councillors in comparison to other jurisdictions in the UK (Potter, 2014). Other statistics⁴⁴ reveal:

- In the 2014 local elections to the 11 new councils, out of 462 candidates, 116 (25%) were women;
- 4 of the 15 Ministers and Junior Ministers in the Executive are women;
 - 37% of public appointments in Northern Ireland are held by women;
 - Out of the 12 Statutory Committees, there are 3 female Chairpersons and 2 female Deputy Chairpersons.

It is evident that young women largely have been lost in the politics of Northern Ireland and many have still not found a place or a voice. Research has ascribed the political invisibility of women to gender inequality in post-conflict contexts (Deiana, 2013; Murtagh, 2008) and has contended that this has had a detrimental effect on the stability of the peace process (Potter, 2004). The endurance of a male-dominated political culture has, perhaps inevitably, led to a

³⁹ UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, Articles 3, 5a, 7, 8. Beijing Platform for Action, 1995, Strategic Objectives G1 and G2.

⁴⁰ See The Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement (1998); The Gender Equality Strategy: A strategic framework for action to promote gender equality for women and men 2006-2016.

⁴¹ <http://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/releasespublications/documents/population/2011/Cen2011IrelandNorthernIreland.pdf>.

⁴² <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>

⁴³ <http://aims.niassembly.gov.uk/mlas/statistics.aspx>

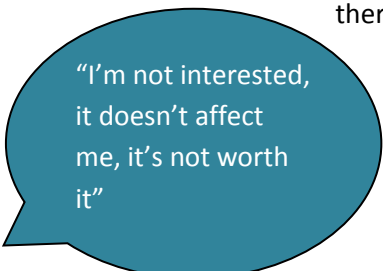
⁴⁴ http://www.detini.gov.uk/women_in_northern_ireland_2014.pdf?rev=0

population of young women who hold ‘... a high level of disillusionment with politics and politicians, with many identifying what they see as continuing sectarianism in Northern Ireland politics’ (Gray and Neill, 2010, p1). Yet this lack of presence and participation is unlikely to be addressed unless young women are given the ‘... space, freedom and encouragement to begin to articulate their thoughts and concerns’ (*ibid*). This critique will examine the political participation of young women in Northern Ireland. As the young women’s development worker for Youth Action Northern Ireland, this text is reflective of my experiences and thoughts from my engagement with young women on peace building and participation, and the quotes used are their voices.

5.2 Young Women Living on the Edge of Politics and Participation

My work with young women aged 13-25 explores how they are affected by politics, segregation and the legacy of the conflict, and how they can become more empowered to engage with these issues. In 2013, a group of Youth Action Northern Ireland peer researchers worked with 418 young people across the region and developed a *Youth Peace Manifesto* containing 8 ASKs to inform progress towards a more peaceful society. ASK 7 stated: ‘We need more young adults, especially young women, in government to champion young people and encourage us to vote’. If this ASK is to be fulfilled, it is firstly necessary to identify those factors that challenge the political participation of young women. This critique begins with an analysis of some of the factors that challenge young women in relation to Northern Ireland politics.

- **SWITCHED-OFF YOUNG WOMEN** Young women often express a lack of connection to, and understanding of, ‘politics’. They find it hard to place themselves within a



“I’m not interested, it doesn’t affect me, it’s not worth it”

political sphere that they perceive to be dominated by male, tribal and entrenched arguments that have little relevance to their lives.

- **HEADS DOWN, STAY SILENT** A characteristic that is also apparent is passive acceptance of the status quo. Young women often prefer to keep their heads down and avoid conflict and confrontation. They choose not to get involved, they don’t question and as a consequence they stay silent. Our politics in Northern Ireland is often presented in an argumentative and confrontational light which can be very off putting. As a result, the representative voice of young women is not heard on issues that affect them.
- **HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF** There is a sense of loyalty and compliance to family and tribe, and political opinion and participation is undoubtedly affected by this legacy. Segregation in communities in Northern Ireland leads to a lack of exposure to the other and creates a separate way of life that reinforces rather than challenges political attitudes. Often, the passing down of these attitudes and behaviours within families, communities and peer groups goes unquestioned through loyalty and a genuine fear of being alienated.
- **BUBBLE WRAPPED** Traditional roles mean young women in communities are not socialised into political structures and systems. In some respects, politics is still viewed as an ‘unsuitable’ job for a woman. It is as if they are ‘bubble wrapped’ and that there are real or perceived threats to their safety if they cross into unfamiliar territory. Consequently, it becomes easier to stick with what and who you know, with the result that the aspirations and

experiences of young women remain limited. This can impact on every area of their lives.

that thwarts rather than energizes participation.

- **WHO RUNS THE WORLD?** Politics is a man's world in Northern Ireland and traditional challenges are ever present. Young women question 'Will I be taken seriously? 'Isn't a politician more like a man's job?' 'Does this relate to me?' Young women's avoidance of conflict and confrontation means that it can be easier to vote green or orange, going along with community opinion rather than to think in depth about our complex political system. This is not helped by the conspicuous shortfall of female role models and reinforces the perception that politics and leadership is a man's world.

- **MISSING PIECE OF THE JIGSAW** Structural barriers continue to challenge young women's participation in public life. Childcare is a perfect example of a persistent issue which prevents young women from participating fully. The lack of resources and options for workable support means young women tend to opt out. This barrier, coupled with the traditional perception of women as the main carer (and the inherent guilt that accompanies any behaviour which might step outside this) makes full and active participation almost impossible.

- **WHAT'S THE POINT?** Reflecting on the experiences and expressions of young women around participation, there is an absence of future mindedness that translates as 'what is the point?' This apathy is partly rooted in lack of confidence but, worryingly, it creates a cyclical pattern

"I think it has a bad impact on all women because it's men making women's decisions."

5.3 Radicalising Young Women Towards Democracy, Peace and Participation

This critique presents a challenge to practitioners, researchers, policy makers and politicians. How do we build political consciousness and influence a broader future mindedness for young women in Northern Ireland? How can we ignite their passion to inform and influence their lives and the lives of those around them? In this regard, formal and informal education can play a pivotal role.

▪ SWITCHED-ON YOUNG WOMEN

Research (Gray and Neill, 2011) argues that young women have been largely left out of conflict discourse and recognition of the contribution of women to civic society, through community and voluntary groups during and after the conflict has not translated into mainstream political participation (Deiana, 2013).

Grass-roots women's organisations functioning as '*... potential resources for nurturing female politicians*' (Potter, 2013, p.14) are an obvious pathway to energise political participation. Groups that specifically take a gender conscious approach with young women can help to develop their understanding and ultimately give them space to develop their thoughts and skills around public life. In saying this, the precarious nature of funding represents an on-going challenge to such developmental programmes.

- **BUILDING FIRE IN THE BELLY** We need to light a fire in young women's bellies! This means having conversations with young women and moving them from their comfort zone. Awareness-raising is a key starting point so that young women fully appreciate their political power

in Northern Ireland. They need to begin to make personal connections to their situations and circumstances rather than passively listening and accepting the norms in their community. Research shows that personal connections to issues and events often motivate participation (Coleman et al., 2008). By lighting the fire a new motivation or appetite for positive change can be generated.

- **WE NEED TO TALK** Understanding the impact of political decisions on their lives requires young women to have challenging, awkward and emotional conversations. In this regard, formal and informal education has a pivotal role. Formal curriculum options such as Local and Global Citizenship are ideal starting points for critical and reflective debate in a safe environment that could be enhanced through tailored provision from the NI Assembly Education Service⁴⁵. Comparable informal education opportunities exist within the youth and community sector, with a range of projects targeted to the specific circumstances of young women's lives⁴⁶. For example, Youth Action Northern Ireland have recently launched 'Bullseye - A resource for working with young women'⁴⁷ which contains practical activities and tools for workers engaging with young women around participation.
- **THINKING LEADING TO ACTIONS, BIG AND SMALL** Young women who develop the skills of critical enquiry become young women who can take critical action - once an

"It felt good to speak my mind and be able to give my opinion"

inequality is recognized, it becomes harder to ignore. Representation of women in Northern Ireland politics requires improvement in equal access that increases their capacity to participate in power and decision-making (Potter, 2013; Galligan and Clavero, 2008) Young women need to become more open to, and hungry for, positive change. They need to see alternative futures and start to think how their decisions can influence outcomes for themselves and others.

- **SPACES BEYOND** We need to create greater mobility options for young women, so that they can hear 'the other' side of the story. Research has shown that young women generally are dis-engaged from mainstream political activity (Schuster, 2013; Gray and Neill, 2010), with those from low socio-economic backgrounds the least involved (Briggs, 2008). Intentional spaces and opportunities for young women need to be created that encourage meaningful face to face contact. It is in these spaces that young women can experience active participation; by identifying commonalities and challenges they become more practised in challenging, awkward and emotional conversation and debates.

- **BREAK-THROUGH**

This critique is framed by the view that young women need to be 'radicalised towards democracy, peace and participation'. Formal recognition of women's political participation needs to translate into substantive and inclusive representation (Galligan, 2013) that will engage them throughout their adult life. Young women need to break the culture of politeness and silence and show leadership by creating opportunities to engage with political representatives on decisions

⁴⁵ <http://education.niassembly.gov.uk/>

⁴⁶ See for example, Youth Action Gender Equality Unit; Public Achievement, Breaking the Cycle project; Footprints Women's Centre Empowerment and Participation Course.

⁴⁷ Bullseye: A resource for working with Young Women. Equality Work with Youth Women, 2014. www.youthaction.org

that affect their lives and the lives of those around them. In doing so, young women will develop the skills and passion necessary for active peace and participation. *“It is only by centring the experiences of ordinary young women that it will be possible to provide insight into the significance of gender to participation and to understand the problem with representative politics (Harris et al., 2010, p.28).*

5.4 Key Messages


In tying the threads of this critique together, the question remains whether the rights of young women to be active politically are being upheld. From my interactions with political activists and leaders, there is no doubt that the rights of young women to politically participate are supported across the board.

However, such willingness to support is a far cry from promoting and adopting a pro-active stance in championing the political participation of young women. My work with young women reveals that the rhetoric doesn't match the reality. To move forward, politicians must first recognize the disconnect between young women's lives and politics and seek out ways to overcome the barriers identified in this critique.

The key messages emerging from my engagement with young women are:

- **Develop options through formal and informal education**

There is a need for funded resource development that is transferable across formal and informal education. Delivered by skilled workers these resources represent gender conscious work with young women around participation with specific, targeted skills development. These gender conscious projects should



“I am 100% that I can be a big influence and impact change as a role model”

aim to socialize young women into political structures and systems. They should encourage young women to develop skills such as decision making, critical enquiry, debate and having difficult conversations and incorporate these into their everyday life. Developing their skills repertoire will ultimately lead on to more confidence in, and conviction for, participation. In this regard, the *Bullseye* resource aims to build on the Department of Education's (DE) educational priorities to contribute to lifelong learning opportunities and address barriers to learning.

- **Build on good practice**

The proposed Northern Ireland Youth Assembly⁴⁸ identifies political participation that is representative and diverse and, notably, a higher proportion of females (54.7%) than males (45.3%) completed the youth panel survey to determine its constitution and scope (NIA, 2011). The option for a democratically structured forum that both informs and facilitates engagement with key issues is a valid starting point, particularly if coupled with identifiable mentors and role models. Whilst this can be seen as a good starting point that involves young women in political structures, the question still remains, why does this not translate into our Assembly and councils?

- **Media has a role to play**

Politics should be promoted as a viable and attractive career option for young women. This requires dedicated commitment and effort from government, using positive female role models as part of a widespread *Get Into Politics* publicity campaign. Similar initiatives have been adopted to increase recruitment into teaching and social work. If politics is promoted as a viable career option, then young women might be more likely to take the steps they need to in terms of

⁴⁸ <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/Youth-Assembly/YouthPanelReport.pdf>

education and skills development which will lead them into a political sphere. Similarly, there is untapped potential to use social media to mobilise young women – for example, inter-active socio-political forums could rejuvenate and inspire a new generation of politicised women.

▪ ***Invest in support systems***

There is a need for strategic investment to enable young women to be fully participative in the political process. This includes access to resources and/or finances to accommodate caring responsibilities such as childcare or family respite. Young women should be fully informed about available support systems, finance and resources. Crucially, these options should be available to young women throughout all stages of the

participatory process - in school, youth groups, training, employment and community settings.

▪ ***Further research***

It is essential that there is further research into the place of young women in Northern Ireland, particularly their participation in political spheres and public life. The barriers to participation are well recognized, so research should be forward looking, pro-active and hold government accountable for its commitment to gender equality. Identifying good practice and applying it to all levels of civic life will strengthen conviction for this work and can be used to activate all young women, including those from disadvantaged and marginalized groups.

6.0 The Participation of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual (LGB) Youth

Gavin Boyd

Gavin is the Policy and Advocacy Manager for the Rainbow Project. The Project works to improve the physical, mental and emotional health of gay, lesbian, bisexual and/or transgender people and their families in Northern Ireland.

Further Information on The Rainbow Project can be accessed at www.rainbow-project.org

6.1 Overview

Legislation to protect the rights of lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people⁴⁹ incorporates measures to address decriminalisation, anti-discrimination and hate crime. Much of it has been developed towards protecting the interests of LGB adults with limited reference to the particular inequalities experienced by LGB youth. In Northern Ireland, as a society emerging from protracted conflict, there are particular barriers to addressing the cultural needs of LGB young people which cannot be disentwined from the segregated society in which they live. Although no empirical research has yet been conducted on this issue, anecdotal evidence suggests that during the conflict and as a result of criminalisation many LGB people, particularly gay and bisexual men, left Northern Ireland for other more accepting or anonymous places such as Manchester and London. Arguably, this lost generation has led to an absence of LGB safe spaces and organisations to support LGB young people. Recent research (Schubotz and McNamee, 2009) has highlighted that prevailing provincial, conservative attitudes together with family pressures and school bullying continues to create a difficult environment for young gay men⁵⁰. In addition, Northern Ireland is a region with a

small and largely rural population. Whilst little comparative research has been carried out into the experiences of urban and rural dwellers, there is some evidence to suggest that LGB people living in rural areas are more likely to experience poorer outcomes than their urban-dwelling counterparts (LGBT Youth Scotland, 2005; LGBT Youth Scotland, 2013). This, in part, can be explained by the limited LGB services that exist outside of the main conurbations of Greater Belfast, Foyle and Newry, as well as the reduced likelihood of knowing other people who are LGB. The Rainbow Project is currently undertaking research, commissioned by The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) and which looks at issues affecting LGB&T people living in rural areas, exploring in particular their experiences of isolation, and the recommendations will be used to inform the funding of LGB-specific services in Western and Southern regions.

For many LGB youth, awareness of their sexual identity takes place at an early age whilst they are still in formal education (Youthnet, 2003). Schools in Northern Ireland are advised that issues relating to sexual orientation should be approached in an equitable and respectful way, yet it would seem that its visibility in the curriculum and wider school policy is limited. This critique will consider sexual

⁴⁹ See for example UNDHR, Articles 2, 19, 27(1); Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006.

⁵⁰ The research was based on 20 one-to-one in-depth interviews conducted with young gay and bisexual men in NI between 2000 and 2006. These interviews were conducted during two larger mixed-methods projects: one undertaken by the University of Ulster and the NI branch of the Family Planning Association on sexual attitudes and lifestyles of 14-25 year olds.

“Hate, especially in schools, other students, sometimes older people saying you should go and get help and stuff, or that ‘it is just a phase you are going through’”

orientation within formal education in Northern Ireland and its impact on the participation of LGB youth.

6.2 Education in Northern Ireland

The right to equal education is set down in national and international instruments⁵¹, yet the extent to which education policy and practice discriminates against LGB young people is a matter of some concern (Save the Children et al., 2011; NIHRC, 2001). The social, political and cultural divisions of Northern Ireland continue to define where we live, who we know, how we access services and, importantly, which school we attend. Whilst the majority of schools remain separated by religious identity, most have a strong denominational ethos which can be at variance with the rights of young people with minority sexual orientations. Individual schools can determine the content of relationships and sexuality education (RSE), including how or whether sexual orientation is discussed with pupils, and the visibility of homophobia in anti-bullying policies is subject to similar discretion. Often, these issues are ignored, meaning that many LGB pupils learn little that is relevant to their needs (Boyd, 2011; ETI, 2011). Crucially, this omission also shapes the understandings of *all* young people.

One of the main reasons for this systemic exclusion comes from a lack of regulation which is unique to education. The Northern Ireland Act (1998) contains provision through Section 75 which mandates all public authorities to show due regard to promoting equality of opportunity on nine protected grounds, one of which is sexual orientation⁵². Section 75 was a revolutionary provision, designed to protect the citizens of Northern

"I think it might be nice for some people to know that the government supports them"

Ireland; it applies across all government departments and arms-length bodies, councils, the police service and hospitals. This includes the Department of Education (DE), Education and Library Boards (ELBs) and the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS), who have an obligation to maintain datasets on the nine protected grounds. This is important because it allows for the particular experiences of young people to be recognised and built into the policy development process⁵³. However, very little data is gathered on LGB young people, making them a largely invisible population to departmental policy makers. For example, DE cannot disaggregate the educational attainment of LGB young people and so are unable to identify and redress potential inequalities. More specifically, Section 75 does not, as yet, apply directly to schools. Arguably, this has led to an *ad hoc* approach in addressing minority sexual orientation through school policy and the curriculum, with vast differences in how issues are addressed and limited oversight and accountability from statutory agencies.

6.3 Education Policy and Sexual Orientation

Through Departmental Circulars⁵⁴ and equality guidance, schools are informed of their obligations to observe non-discrimination in education including a responsibility to ensure that, through policies and practices, pupils are not treated less favourably on the grounds of sexual orientation, and that homophobic bullying is challenged in the same way as other forms of bullying (Equality Commission, 2008). Research (Schubotz and O'Hara, 2011; Boyd, 2011) has confirmed that young LGB people are more likely to be bullied, with many reporting negative school experiences and a prevalence of homophobic bullying, with LGB

⁵¹ UNHCR, Article 26(1); UNCRC, Articles 28, 29

⁵²http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/index/equality/statutory-duty/section_75.htm

⁵³http://www.deni.gov.uk/equality_scheme_easy_read_version.pdf

⁵⁴ DE Circular 2010/01 Guidance on Relationships and Sexuality Education

youth feeling they were being discriminated against⁵⁵. Boards of Governors have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of all pupils and to determine measures to protect pupils from abuse⁵⁶, whilst pastoral care arrangements and provision should demonstrate similar commitment to the personal and social development of all pupils, as fully participating members of the school and its wider community (DE, 2010). Clear, direct leadership from senior management is fundamental to ensure uniformity in effectively dealing with any form of homophobic bullying (Save the Children et al., 2011) and the implications of inconsistent approaches can be far reaching. LGB young people in schools where homophobic language and attitudes are tacitly permitted are more likely to experience poorer mental health outcomes; they are also more likely to be absent from school with detrimental impact on their academic attainment and future career opportunities (Guasp et al., 2014). In school, teachers play a fundamentally important role in educating young people about standards of conduct and in regulating the behaviour of pupils in their charge. Yet, research has shown that while many teachers recognise the prevalence and inappropriate nature of homophobic language and attitudes, they are unsure how to intervene and the extent to which school management will support

them, with some challenged on 'promoting homosexuality' by educating pupils as to why such behaviour is acceptable (Guasp et al., 2014).

"There's a lot of homophobia in my area. ... when I'm out with my girlfriend I always get comments and that would put off other young people going around expressing who they are because of that."

This omission also has short and longer term implications for heterosexual young people. Employment protections for LGB people⁵⁷ has changed the culture of working environments in the UK; while the use of homophobic language is not closely regulated in many schools, employers have greater responsibilities for ensuring their workplaces are welcoming environments for all employees, regardless of their sexual orientation. For example, lack of awareness of the implications for *all* hate crime can put young people at risk of coming into contact with the criminal justice system through prosecution for conduct that may never have been sanctioned in school.

There are lessons to be learned from the non-formal education sector. For example, the LGB&T Youth App⁵⁸ has been devised to provide LGB&T young people access to information, support and services, including the facility to report a hate crime. The Rainbow Project, in collaboration with other agencies, has developed a resource⁵⁹ on anti-homophobic bullying practice in schools, whilst a similar collaborative partnership has developed a training programme and tool kit⁶⁰ to help youth workers explore lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGB&T) issues.

6.4 Sexuality in the Northern Ireland Curriculum

The Northern Ireland curriculum is intended to develop young people as individuals and as members of society, with the skills and capabilities to make informed

⁵⁵ The Education Equality Project recently carried out an online survey of the experiences of 133 LGB young people (aged 14-25) in education in NI.

⁵⁶ Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order, 2003, Article 18.

⁵⁷ <http://www.equalityni.org/ECNI/media/ECNI/Publications/Employers%20and%20Service%20Providers/SOGFSmainguide2008.pdf?ext=.pdf>

⁵⁸ <http://www.youthnetni.org.uk/LGBT-App-9538.html>

⁵⁹ <http://www.youthnetni.org.uk/Leave-It-Out-8119.html>

⁶⁰ <http://www.youthnetni.org.uk/OUTstanding-Youth-Work-8110.html>

choices in adult life (CCEA, 2007). Through the Learning Areas of *Learning for Life and Work*⁶¹ and *Religious Education*, this includes personal development, morality, human rights and diversity. Curriculum guidance notes state that *'the issue of sexual orientation should be handled by schools in a sensitive, non-confrontational and reassuring way'* and that *'... all students/pupils have the right to learn in a safe environment, to be treated with respect and dignity and not to be treated any less favourably on grounds of their actual or perceived sexual orientation'*⁶². Although the themes of relationships and sexual maturation are highlighted, there are no specific references to sexual orientation issues; similarly, there is no specific reference to homophobia although other forms of discrimination – for example, sectarianism, sexism and racism – are identified. Whilst it is acknowledged that schools can supplement the minimum requirements of the curriculum with additional material, the sensitive and sometimes challenging issue of sexual orientation is rarely explored, leading to recommendations for the implementation of whole-school training (ETI, 2011).

For LGB young people, the absence of sexual orientation issues from the statutory curriculum can have short and longer term negative impacts on their confidence to express themselves inside and outside school. Exploring sexual orientation in a safe and secure environment can help them towards greater understanding of their own identity and reduce feelings of social isolation as well as inform them of specific legislative measures to ensure their equal participation and protection from discrimination. For example, many LGB youth are not aware of their employment rights, their rights to access

goods, facilities and services; they frequently do not learn about civil partnerships, hate crime and the ability of same-sex partners to jointly adopt in Northern Ireland (Boyd, 2011). Additionally, many do not have models of what a good relationship looks like when it involves two men or two women. RSE, if delivered inclusively, is an opportunity for LGB young people to learn the qualities of good relationships as well as recognise unhealthy relationships and abusive partners. Gay and bisexual men frequently experience the worst sexual health outcomes compared to other groups in our society; this is attributed to a lack of relevant sex education leading to complicated relationships shaped by societal shaming of intimacy between men and pervasive stereotypes of a promiscuous lifestyle (O'Hara, 2013).

"My school does play a good role in trying to normalize it"

6.5 Key Messages

- Education and sexual orientation are still highly politicised and contentious issues in Northern Ireland due to the conflict and on-going societal segregation and LGB youth face unique challenges where these two issues intersect. A twenty first century education system must take a holistic view of the multiple identities held by young people and provide a full and equitable education experience to all.
- Greater uniformity in schools' responses to homophobic language and attitudes is vital to redress mixed messages about acceptable conduct in school, in work and in wider society.
- LGB youth in rural areas face particular challenges, not least in relation to experiences of isolation and difficulties accessing support and services. In order to redress the inequalities experienced by LGB young people it is important to

⁶¹ The Learning for Life and Work curriculum at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 includes guidance for Personal Development, including Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)

⁶² CCEA, 2007 and CCEA, 2011

http://www.nicurriculum.org.uk/docs/key_stage_4/areas_of_learning/learning_for_life_and_work/ks4_PD_guidance_Aug2011.pdf

mainstream their interests throughout the services with which they come into contact. In order to mitigate the different experiences of LGB young people who live in rural

and urban areas, services, including education, must be reflective of their needs and take steps to actively promote their participation.

7.0 The Economic Participation of Youth leaving the Youth Justice System in Northern Ireland

Dr Tracy Irwin

Tracy Irwin is a Lecturer in the School of Education at Ulster University. She has worked with a range of adult learners, including disaffected youth, the long term unemployed and with inmates in Maghaberry Prison. Her research interests reflect this range and she has published articles relating to prison learning.

7.1 Introduction

The underpinning aim of the Youth Justice system in Northern Ireland is to prevent offending, protect the public and secure the welfare of the child (DoJ, 2011). Around 10,000 young people come into contact with the Youth Justice system in Northern Ireland (NI) each year (DoJ, 2011). Primarily their offences include criminal damage, theft and common assault. Throughout the UK certain groups remain over-represented in the system, especially looked after children; those with mental health and substance misuse problems (Scott and Codd, 2010); those with learning disabilities (Prison Reform Trust 2007) and learning difficulties (Humber and Snow, 2001). The majority of young offenders are male and while there are some young women in the system, female crime has never surfaced as a major issue in Northern Ireland (DoJ, 2013). Although most offences are of a fairly minor nature and few young people continue offending beyond their teenage years, there are those for whom offending becomes more serious and who run the risk of becoming life-time criminals, serving multiple prison sentences, never fulfilling their full potential (Irwin, 2008a). Youth who are committed to custody go either to Woodlands Juvenile Justice Centre or the Young Offenders' Centre at Hydebank Wood, an adult prison establishment operated by the Northern Ireland Prison Service.

This critical commentary considers the economic participation of youth leaving the Youth Justice system with particular regard to the role of education in enhancing employment opportunities. Locally, young men at Hydebank Wood have been described as 'a forgotten group' who attract little

'political, media or academic interest' (Owers, 2011, p70) and so very little is known about those who have been involved in the Youth Justice system.

7.2 Context

Northern Ireland is a post-conflict but still deeply divided society; many youth continue to live in largely segregated environments and whilst paramilitary influences have reduced in many communities, the 'ordinary problems of large urban environments' have become more conspicuous (Gallagher, 2004, p.643) (emphasis in original), particularly in the most economically deprived communities (Leonard, 2006) and violence for many young men 'is a major factor in [their] lives' (Reilly *et al.*, 2004, p.474). Inevitably for some, this will lead to involvement with the Youth Justice system. At a time of high youth unemployment and intense competition for jobs, those with a criminal record find it difficult to obtain and retain employment. Many will have experienced intergenerational unemployment and will have no expectations of obtaining or maintaining a 'good job', often opting for low paid, intermittent and dangerous jobs on the black and grey market or relying on state benefits (MacInnes *et al.*, 2012). Clearly significant challenges exist in re-engaging and re-orientating these youth towards a more economically productive pathway. Media representation of young men in terms of crime levels and anti-social behaviour (Harland and McCready, 2012) has arguably contributed to negative public perceptions of young offenders, so it is understandable that those who have been in custodial care may feel disadvantaged when seeking employment or placement opportunities.

"I'm good at working with my hands. I'd go to tech. I wouldn't go to university."

A range of international instruments set out minimum standards to protect the fundamental rights of youth in conflict with the law⁶³, including the expectation that youth detention centres should provide rehabilitation opportunities that maximise re-integration into society (Include Youth, 2011; Convery et al., 2008; Kilkelly *et al.*, 2002). International standards state that if detention is to have a positive effect it must involve a co-ordinated effort to address the problems that give rise to offending behaviour⁶⁴. Crucially, this includes provision that meets education, health, developmental and safety needs as well as rehabilitative and vocational options in preparation for release⁶⁵. The fundamental right to

"I applied for tech last Saturday but I have a restriction for 18 months"

education⁶⁶ and its function in the full development of the individual is particularly pertinent for the economic participation of youth during and after custody.

7.3 The Role of Education

Formal and non-formal education has a pivotal role to improve the prospective economic participation of youth in custodial settings. Many young offenders will have negative experiences of compulsory schooling and will have disengaged from the education system at an early age (Irwin, 2008a).

Consequently, a significant number continue to reject education even when it is offered as part of a resettlement or rehabilitation package. A recent report for the European Commission (Hawley et al, 2013, p.5) found that *'in spite of the potential benefits of education and training for prisoners, such as improving their employability, social inclusion and re-integration into society, they tend to participate in learning relatively little.'* This replicates Irwin's (2008b) findings that prison regimes in Northern Ireland are often not conducive to the provision of appropriate education with security demands being predominant. Similarly, McCord and Irwin (2012) identified deficits in current educational provision for young offenders, including the conspicuous absence of the Northern Ireland curriculum.

It is known that *'many offenders are demotivated by traditional learning and are unwilling to participate in classroom environments where learning materials are paper-based and the use of ICT to support learning is limited'* (DE, 2005, p.34). To redress this, evidence suggests that essential skills in literacy and numeracy should be delivered in accessible and innovative ways (Becta, 2009), with technology enhanced learning (TEL) and e-learning methodologies offering opportunities to engage learners as part of a wider educational community. Similarly, informal approaches based on youth work methodologies represent alternative and effective approaches to learning (Harland and McCready, 2012); this includes learning wings, taster sessions, joint officer and student training (Irwin, 2008b). Additionally, sport,

⁶³ Articles 37,39 and 40 of the UNCRC. Articles 7, 10 and 11 of the UNDHR.

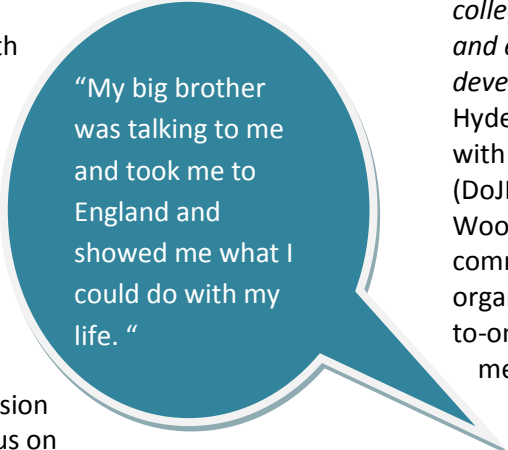
See also: The UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (the 'Beijing Rules', 1985); the UN Rules for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (the 'Riyadh Guidelines', 1990); the UN Rules for the Protection of Juveniles deprived of their Liberty (1990); *European Rules for juvenile offenders subject to sanctions and measures* (the European Rules); The Council of Europe's Guidelines on Child Friendly Justice, adopted in November 2010. Also includes: The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR); The Convention against Torture, and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (UN CAT); The UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (1977); The UN Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment (1988); European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; The European Prison Rules (2006).

⁶⁴ See: UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education 1960; Articles 28 & 29 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989; Article 2 First Protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms 1950; UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2001), General Comment No. 1 (2001) Article 29 (1): The Aims of Education. CRC/GC/2001/1, United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child; Article 13 & 14 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1966; Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1981).

⁶⁵ Rule 38, UN Rules for the protection of Juveniles deprived of their Liberty, 1990 (UN Rules); Para 21(a)-(c) Council of Europe Child Friendly Justice Guidelines (2010); Rule 61, European Rules, 2008; Rules 38-42; 47 Havana Rules.

⁶⁶ Articles 28 and 29 UNCRC; Article 26 UNDHR

arts, media, and outdoor activities, with an emphasis on experiential learning, hands-on practical work, have been successfully applied to engage reluctant learners (Sandford *et al.*, 2008). Government has committed to put education at the heart of youth justice (Ministry of Justice, 2013) and educational programmes both within the custodial environment and beyond are offered. However, one of the criticisms of current curriculum provision is its narrow focus on basic skills so those emerging from the youth justice system may not be 'job-ready' and are likely to need significant supports that increase aspiration, self-esteem and provide the necessary skills for productive employment (NCB, 2010).



"My big brother was talking to me and took me to England and showed me what I could do with my life."

incentives to employers to take on youth with a criminal record and involving ex-offenders as mentors can provide significant benefits (Cleghorne *et al.*, 2011).

More widely, there is growing interest in re-conceptualising youth justice institutions as '*secure colleges*' (PRT, 2011, p.66) that promote a '*culture and ethos of learning and holistic personal development*' (p3). Proposals to develop Hydebank Wood in this way are well developed with an oversight group currently operational (DoJNI, 2014). Under these proposals, Hydebank Wood YOC would operate collaboratively with community-based educational and employment organisations; be multi-disciplinary; provide one-to-one interventions; and offer support to young men on release. This reflects the vision that education should encompass '*... learning in its broadest sense including informal, creative, vocational and academic learning as well as activities that broaden horizons and promote personal development (ibid, p.2)*'. The 'Maze model of prison learning' (Irwin, 2003, p473) provides a case-study example of how a culture of learning could be developed within a custodial environment (see Figure 16).

7.4 How can the Youth Justice System Improve the Economic Participation of Young Offenders?

Research evidence identifies a range of approaches to support the transition from the Youth Justice system to full economic participation in society (Cleghorne *et al.*, 2011); many successful rehabilitation and re-settlement interventions have adopted a holistic and individualised approach, addressing in equal measure accommodation, education, employment, training and personal support issues (NCB, 2010). Such strategic, joined-up approaches between statutory agencies and local authorities can effectively ensure gains are not lost (NACRO, 2006; NCB 2010; Bateman *et al.*, 2013). This includes the appointment of a single professional or key-worker, increased use of role models and mentors and provision of halfway houses (NCB, 2010). Similarly, there is considerable potential for an e-portfolio system that allows prisoners' achievements and accreditation to travel '*... between education and employment, including vocational pathways and work-based learning*' (Hartnell-Young *et al.*, 2006, p.860). Additionally,

7.5 Key Messages

■ Pre-custody

Reflecting recent responses to the youth justice review (CLC, Opportunity Youth), there should be a reduction in the automatic use of custody. Where a custodial sentence is deemed necessary it should be for as short a period as possible - '*problematic behaviour in young people [should] be addressed by the welfare system not the criminal justice system*' (NCB, 2010, p15). Restorative justice methodologies, youth conferences and community based arrangements are already in place (DoJ, 2011); these should be promoted more widely as alternatives to formal custodial sentences as part of an alternative, holistic early intervention programme.

■ During custody

The evidence highlights that resettlement plans can prevent re-offending and support rehabilitation into society (Bateman *et al.*, 2013; NCB, 2010). This emphasis should

underpin all youth custody organisations, with individualised plans drawn up as soon as the young person arrives (Bateman *et al.*, 2013). Education has a critical role and innovative curriculum proposals, including the use of interactive teaching and learning technologies, should be actively explored. Plans to reconceptualise Hydebank Wood as a secure college should be pursued with vigour, with concurrent commitment to the training and retraining of prison staff, and greater involvement of mentors and other key workers.

▪ **Post-custody**

Efforts to improve the economic participation of these youth extend beyond the youth justice system and require wider structural and societal change. Organisations involved in the Youth Justice system need to become more outward looking, working with relevant agencies, educators and employers, to put in place a seamless support network that enhances the economic potential of those reaching the end of a custodial committal. Greater efforts by the Youth Justice system to advertise success stories of rehabilitation, re-settlement and productive employment could begin to address negative stereotyping that can impede meaningful economic participation.

▪ **Future research**

There is clearly a need for more research in this area. Longitudinal profiling and additional research into the experiences of these youth is necessary to inform future policy and practice in this area (McCord and Irwin, 2012). Qualifications obtained, employment opportunities and social engagement are just some examples of data which might be gathered to assist in policy development. The voice of youth themselves, particularly in Northern Ireland, is rarely heard and information about their life and career progression is not known. Effective channels need to be facilitated that enable youth to communicate their views to those involved in policy decisions that affect them.

Figure 16: The Maze Model of Prison Education



8.0 Concluding Comments

As highlighted in this report, youth in Northern Ireland is not a homogenous group; whilst there are challenges to participation common to all youth, some groups experience additional barriers. In this report, participation is defined through the possibilities for youth to actively contribute to wider society. While the situations for each of groups in this report might differ, the individual critiques recurrently highlight the impact and potential consequences of limited meaningful participation.

One aspect which comes across strongly across in this report is the role of formal and non-formal **education** and the benefits it provides in terms of economic, political, social and cultural participation. Whilst the youth in this report has been able to access their right to education, the quality and relevance of provision is inconsistent, with mixed outcomes across each group. It is important, therefore, that education policy reflects the participatory rights and the needs of all young people, particularly those groups most at risk of marginalisation and/or exclusion.

Another striking aspect of participation is the **perception of youth** and how groups of youth are presented in the media and viewed by wider society. Emphasis on negative representations does little to portray youth as a vibrant, committed and informed population. In the immediacy of the digital age, active promotion by those working with or on behalf of youth and by youth themselves provides opportunities to present a range of counter-perspectives, particularly from youth most often subject to negative stereotypes.

At the same time, perceptions of **invisibility** permeate these critiques. Undoubtedly, the circumstances of some young people's lives limits their opportunities for involvement and impacts on their active participation in society. Access to relevant information and

resources, financial support or creating a forum where they have a voice are starting points. However, it is important that government recognises and responds to the immediate and longer term needs of marginalised groups.

In this regard, the **voice of youth** should be integral to policy development and implementation. The voice of youth is a less conspicuous feature of government policy and the narrative of their experiences, aspirations and challenges in a range of contexts is not widely known. Effective channels need to be facilitated that enable youth to communicate their views to those involved in policy decisions that affect them. As citizens now, youth in Northern Ireland should be able to inform and influence decisions affecting them and their voice is integral to democratic processes of growth and change.

Bibliography

Benton T., Cleaver E. and Featherstone G. (2008) *Citizenship education longitudinal study (CELS): Annual Report. Young people's civic participation in and beyond school: attitudes, intentions and influences*. London, Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), p. 1–134.

Beresford, B. (2002) Preventing the social exclusion of disabled children, in D. McNeish, T. Newman and H. Roberts (eds.), *What Works for Children?* Buckingham, Open University Press.

Birdwell, J. and Bani, M. (2014) *"Today's teenagers are more engaged with social issues than ever ..."* *Introducing Generation Citizen*. London, DEMOS.

Boyd, G. (2011) *Left out of the equation*. Belfast, The Rainbow Project.

Briggs, J. (2008) Young women and politics: An oxymoron? *Journal of Youth Studies*, 11(6), p. 579–592.

Brodie, E., Cowling, E. and Nissen, N. (2009) *Understanding participation: A literature review* [Online] National Council for Voluntary Organisations.

Campbell, D. E. (2006) *Why we vote: how schools and communities shape our civic life*. Princeton, Princeton University Press.

Carcillo, S., Fernandez, R., Königs, S. and Minea, A. (2015) *NEET youth in the aftermath of the crisis: Challenges and Policies*. OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers, No. 164. Paris, OECD Publishing

Cavet, J. and Sloper, P. (2004) Participation of disabled children in individual decisions about their lives and in public decisions about service development, *Children and Society*, 18, 4, p. 278–290.

Checkoway, B. (2010) What is youth participation? *Children and Youth Services Review*, 33, p. 340–345.

Children's Law Centre (CLC) (2010) *"The Hood is Down" - Challenging stereotypes of young people through photography*. <http://www.childrenslawcentre.org.uk/index.php/youth-participation-advocacy/rights-in-action/29-pages/youth/rights-in-action/135-2010-projects>.

Coleman S., Morrison D. and Svennevig M. (2008) New media and political efficacy. *International Journal of Communication*, 2, p. 771–791.

Cook, B. and Kothari, U. (2001) The case for participation as tyranny, in Cook, B and Kothari, U. (eds). *Participation the new tyranny?* London, Zed Books, p. 1–15.

Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services (CWYVS). (2007) *The youth curriculum statement for Wales 2007*. Cardiff, CWYVS.

Council of Europe (COE). (2003.) Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life. 21 May 2003. Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe. Strasbourg, COE.

Council of Europe (COE). (2012) Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, Youth and democracy: the changing face of youth political engagement. Strasbourg, COE.

Council of the European Union (2009) *Council Resolution on a Renewed Framework for European Cooperation in the Youth Field*. http://ec.europa.eu/youth/pdf/doc1648_en.pdf

Cutler, D. and Frost, R. (2001) *Taking the Initiative: promoting young people's involvement in public decision making in the UK*. London, Carnegie Young People Initiative.

Deiana, M.A. (2013) Women's citizenship in Northern Ireland after the 1998 agreement. *Irish Political Studies*, 28(3), p. 399-412.

Department for Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) (2014) *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People, 2014-2020*, Department of Children and Youth Affairs. Dublin, Government Publications.

Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF). (2008) *Aiming High For Young People: a ten year strategy for positive activities: Implementation Plan*. London, Department for Children, School and Families.

Department of Education (DE). (2013) *Priorities for youth: improving young people's lives through youth work*. Bangor, DE.

Department of Education (DE). (2010) *Every school a good school. The governors' role*. Bangor, DE.

Department of Education Circular 2010/01 *Guidance on Relationships and Sexuality Education*. Bangor, DE.

Department of Justice Northern Ireland (2011) *A Review of the Youth Justice System in Northern Ireland*. Belfast, Department of Justice Northern Ireland.

Desmet, E. (2012) Implementing the convention on the rights of the child for youth: who and how? *International Journal of Children's Rights*, 20, (1), p. 3-23.

Dorrian, A-M., Tisdall, K. and Hamilton, D. (2001) *Taking the initiative: promoting young people's participation in public decision making in Scotland*. London, Carnegie Young People Initiative.

Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI). (2011) *Report of an evaluation of relationships and sexuality education in post-primary schools*. Bangor, ETI.

Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI). (2009) *An evaluation of the provision to support newcomer pupils in a range of primary and post- primary schools*. Bangor, ETI.

Ekman, J. and Amna, E. (2012) Political participation and civic engagement: Towards a new typology, *Human Affairs*, 22, p. 283-300.

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI). (2008) *Eliminating sexual orientation discrimination in Northern Ireland: A guide on the provision of goods, facilities, services, and premises*. The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (Northern Ireland). Belfast, ECNI.

Eurofound. (2014) *The social situation of young people in Europe*. Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union.

European Commission. (2009) *Youth in Europe. A Statistical Portrait*. Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union.

European Commission (2009) *An EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering*. COM(2009) 200 final. Brussels: European Commission. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2009:0200:FIN:EN:PDF>

Field, J. (2008) *Social Capital*. 2nd edn. Oxon, Routledge.

Finlay, A. K., Flanagan, C. A., and Wray-Lake, L. (2011). Civic patterns and transitions over eight years: The AmeriCorps National study. *Developmental Psychology*, 47, p. 1728-1743.

Finlay, A., Wray-Lake, L., and Flanagan, C. A. (2010) Civic engagement during the transition to adulthood: developmental opportunities and social policies at a critical juncture, in Sherrod, L.R., Torney-Purta, J. and Flanagan, C.A (eds), *Handbook of research on civic engagement in youth*. New York, Wiley, p. 277-305.

Flanagan, C. and Levine, P. (2010) Civic engagement and the transition to adulthood, *Future of Children*, 20 (1), p. 159-179.

Flanagan, C. A. and Christens, B. D. (2011) Youth civic development: Historical context and emerging issues. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, p. 1–9.

Franklin, A. and Sloper, P. (2007) *Participation of Disabled Children and Young People in Decision-making Relating to Social Care*. Social Policy Research Unit, University of York, York.

Galligan, Y. and Clavero, S. (2008) *Assessing gender democracy in the European Union: A methodological framework*. RECON Online Working Paper 2008/16, available at: www.reconproject.eu.

Government of Ireland. (2000) *National Children's Strategy*. Dublin, Government Publications.

Harland, K. and McCready, S. (2012) *Taking boys seriously: a longitudinal study of adolescent male school-life experiences in Northern Ireland*. Research Report No. 59. Bangor, DE, Centre for Young Men's Studies.

Hart, D. and Thompson, C. (2009) *Young people's participation in the youth justice system*. National Children's Bureau. <http://www.ncb.org.uk/media/443937/participationinyouthjusticereport.pdf>

Hart, R. (2008) Stepping back from the ladder: Reflections on a model of participatory work with children, in Reid, A. Jensen, B. Nikel, J. and Simovska, V. (eds) *Participation and learning: perspectives on education and the environment, health and sustainability*. Dordrecht, Springer, p. 19-31

Hart, R. (1997) *Children's participation, the theory and practice of involving young citizens in community development and environmental care*. London, Earthscan Publications Ltd.

Hart, R. (1992) *Children's participation: from tokenism to citizenship*. Florence, UNICEF International Child Development Centre.

Haste, H. (2005) What is a competent citizen and how do we create them? in Oser, F. and Biedermann, H. (eds) *Youth and Politics: Worlds Apart?* Freiburg, University of Fribourg Press.

Head, B. W. (2011) Why not ask them? Mapping and promoting youth participation. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 33, p. 541 – 547.

Hoskins, B., Janmaat, J. G. and Villalba, E. (2009) *Learning citizenship through social participation outside and inside school: A 5 country, multilevel analysis of young people's learning of citizenship*. Conference paper delivered at the European Conference on Education Research, Vienna, 28 September, 2009.

Fitzpatrick, S., Hastings, A., and Kintrea, K. (1998) *Involving young people in urban regeneration*. London, The Policy Press.

Gallagher, T. (2004) After the war comes peace? An examination of the impact of the Northern Ireland Conflict on young people. *Journal of Social Issues*, 60(3), 629-642.

Galligan, Y. (2013) Gender and politics in Northern Ireland: the representation gap re-visited. *Irish Political Studies*, 28(3), p. 413-433.

Gray, A.M. and Neill, G. (2011) Creating a shared society in Northern Ireland: why we need to focus on gender equality. *Youth & Society*, 43(2), p. 468-487.

Guasp, A., Ellison, G. and Satara, T. (2014) *The teachers' report. Homophobic bullying in Britain's schools in 2014*. London, Stonewall.

Harris, A., Wyn, J. and Younes, S. (2010) Beyond apathetic or activist youth: 'ordinary' young people and contemporary forms of participation. *Young.Nordic Journal of Youth Research*, 18(1), p. 9-32.

Hinds, B. (2012) Women's political participation, in McGrattan, C. and Meehan, E. (eds) *Everyday life after the Irish conflict: the impact of devolution and cross-border co-operation*. Manchester, Manchester University Press p 98-114.

Irwin, T. (2008a) The Inside Story, Practitioner Perspectives on Teaching in Prison. *The Howard Journal*, 47(5), p. 512-528.

Irwin, T. (2003) *Prison Education in Northern Ireland: Learning from our paramilitary past*. The Howard Journal, 42(5), p. 471-484.

Kahn, L., Hewes, S. and Rushanara, A. (2009) *Taking the lead: youth leadership in theory and practice*. London, The Young Foundation.

Kerr, D. (2005) Citizenship education in England - listening to young people: new insights from the Citizenship Education Longitudinal Study. *International Journal of Citizenship and Teacher Education*, 1, p. 74-96.

Kinlen, L., Hansson, U., Keenaghan, C., Canavan, J. and O'Connor, U. (2013) *Education for civic engagement in post-primary schools in Ireland and Northern Ireland: a rights perspective*. Ulster University, Children and Youth Programme.

Kirby P., Lanyon C., Cronin K. and Sinclair R. (2003) *Building a culture of participation: involving young people in policy, service planning, delivery and evaluation*. Research report. London, Department for Education and Skills, 2003.

Kirby, P. and Bryson, S. (2002) *Measuring the magic? Evaluating and researching young people's participation in public decision-making*. London, Carnegie Young People Initiative.

Lansdown, G. (2011) Children's welfare and children's rights. In O'Dell, L. and Leverett, S. (eds) *Working with Children and Young People: Co-constructing Practice*. Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan

Lansdown, G. (2001) *Promoting children's participation in democratic decision-making*. <http://www.unicef-icdc.org/publications/pdf/insight6.pdf>

Lansdown, G. (1995) *Taking part: children's participation in decision-making*. London, Institute for Public Policy Research.

Leonard, M. (2006) Teens and territory in contested spaces: Negotiating sectarian interfaces in Northern Ireland. *Children's Geographies*, 4(2), p. 225-238.

LGBT Youth Scotland. (2013) *Life in Scotland for LGBT young people: Health*. Edinburgh, LGBT Youth Scotland.

LGBT Youth Scotland. (2011) *Challenging homophobia together. A research report*. Edinburgh, LGBT Youth Scotland.

LGBT Youth Scotland. (2005) *Including young people in rural areas. Experiences of LGBT youth Scotland*. Edinburgh, LGBT Youth Scotland.

Loncke, P., Cuconato, M., Muniglia, V. and Walther, A. (2012) *Youth participation in Europe: beyond discourses, practices and realities*. Bristol, The Policy Press.

Macpherson, S. (2008) Reaching the top of the ladder? Locating the voices of excluded young people within the participation debate. *Policy & Politics*, 36(3), p. 361–79.

Matthews, H. (2001) Citizenship, youth councils and young people's participation. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 4(3), p. 299-318.

McCord, J. and Irwin, T. (2012) *Reviewing the provision of education for young people in detention: rights, research and reflections on policy and practice*. Ulster University, Children and Youth Programme.

McCready, S. (2011) *Participation and the Big Deal*. Belfast, Youthnet.

McGinley, B. and Grieve, A. (2010) Maintaining the status quo? Appraising the effectiveness of youth councils in Scotland, in Smith, B.P. and Thomas, N. (eds), *A handbook of children and young people's participation: perspectives from theory and practice*. London, Routledge, p. 254-261

McNeish, D. and Newman, T. (2002) Involving children and young people in decision-making, in McNeish, D., Newman, T. and Roberts, H. (eds.), *What works for children?* Buckingham, Open University Press, p. 186-204.

McVey, H. (2009) *Youth led or youth fed? Exploring young people's leadership roles and the dilemmas associated to youth workers supporting them in a YouthBank context in the UK*. Edinburgh, YouthBank Scotland.

Middleton, E. (2006) Youth participation in the UK: bureaucratic disaster or triumph of child rights? *Children, Youth and Environments* 16(2), p. 180-190.

Murtagh, C. (2008) A transient transition: the cultural and institutional obstacles impeding the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition in its progress from informal to formal politics. *Irish Political Studies*, 23(1), p. 21-40.

Mycock, A. and Tonge, J. (2011) The party politics of youth citizenship and democratic engagement. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 65, p. 138-161.

Davey, C. (2010) Children's participation in decision-making. A Summary Report on progress made up to 2010. London, Participation Works.

Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC). (2001) *Enhancing the rights of lesbian, gay and bisexual people in Northern Ireland*. Belfast, NIHRC.

Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) (2006) *Our children and young people – our pledge: a ten-year strategy for children and young people in Northern Ireland, 2006-2016*. Belfast, OFMDFM.

O'Hara, M. (2013) *Through our minds*. Belfast, The Rainbow Project.

Pattie, C., Syed, P. and Whiteley, P. (2003) Citizenship and civic engagement: attitudes and behaviours in Britain. *Political Studies*, 51, p. 443-468.

Podd, W. (2010) Participation, in Batsleer, J. and Davies, B. (eds.) *What is youth work?* Exeter, Learning Matters Ltd, p. 20-32.

Poole, A. (2005). Youth participation in drug prevention programs, Strasbourg: Pompidou Group, Council of Europe

Potter, M. (2014) *Women in local councils: statistical overview*. Northern Ireland Assembly Research and Information Service Briefing Note. Belfast, NIA.

Potter, M. (2004) *Women, civil society and peace-building. Paths to peace through the empowerment of women*. Belfast, Training for Women Network.

Putnam, R.D. (2000) *Bowling alone: the collapse and revival of American community*. New York, Simon & Schuster.

Reilly, J., Muldoon, O. and Byrne, C. (2004) Young men as victims and perpetrators of violence in Northern Ireland: A Qualitative Analysis. *Journal of Social Issues*, 60(3), p. 469-484.

Sandford, R., Duncombe, R. and Armour, K. (2008) The role of physical activity/sport in tackling youth disaffection and anti-social behaviour. *Educational Review*, 60(4), p. 419-435.

Save the Children, The Rainbow Project and Youthnet. (2011) *Leave it out. Developing anti-homophobic bullying practice in schools*. Belfast, Save the Children.

Schubotz, D. and O'Hara, M. (2011) A shared future? Exclusion, stigmatisation and mental health of same-sex-attracted young people in Northern Ireland. *Youth and Society*, 43(2), p. 486-506.

Schubotz, D. and McNamee, H. (2009) 'I knew I wasn't like anybody else': Young men's accounts of coming out and being gay in Northern Ireland'. *Child Care in Practice*, 15(3), p. 193-208.

Schuster, J. (2013) Invisible feminists? Social media and young women's political participation. *Political Science*, 65(1), p. 8-24.

Shaw, A., Brennan, M., Chaskin, R. and Dolan, P. (2012) *Youth civic engagement in non-formal education*. UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, National University of Ireland, Galway. IIEP Policy Forum Paris, 16-18 October 2012.

Sherrod, L. R., Torney-Purta, J., and Flanagan, C. A. (2010). *Handbook of research on civic engagement in youth*. New York: Wiley.

Shier, H. (2001) Pathways to participation: openings, opportunities and obligations. A new model for enhancing children's participation in decision-making, in line with Article 12.1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. *Children & Society*, 15 (2), p. 107-117.

Shooter, M. (2014) *An independent review of the role and functions of the children's commissioner for Wales*. The Welsh Government.

Shukra, K., Ball, M., and Brown, K. (2012) Participation and activism: young people shaping their worlds. *Youth and Policy*, 108, p. 36-54.

Sinclair, R. (2004) Participation in practice: making it meaningful, effective and sustainable. *Children & Society*, 18(2), p. 106-118.

Sinclair, R. and Franklin, A. (2000) *Young people's participation: quality protects*. Research Briefing, No.3. London, Department of Health.

Task Force on Active Citizenship. (2006) *Together we're better*. Background Working Paper. Dublin, Government Publications.

Tisdall, E.K.M. and Liebel, M. (2008) Theorising children's participation in 'collective' decision-making "Children's participation in decision-making: Exploring theory, policy and practice across Europe" Conference Paper delivered in Berlin, June 2008.

Torney-Purta, J. (2002) Patterns in the civic knowledge, engagement, and attitudes of European adolescents: The IEA Civic Education Study. *European Journal of Education*, 37, p. 129-141.

Treseder, P. (1997). *Empowering children and young people*. London, Save the Children.

Innovations in Civic Participation (ICP) (2010) *Youth Civic Participation in Action: Meeting community development needs worldwide*. Washington, ICP.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2013) *Enhancing youth political participation throughout the electoral cycle. A Good Practice Guide*. New York. UNDP.

Williams, C., Edlin, J. and Beals, F. (2010) Commentary: 6: Spaces and Structures: Looking from the outside. In Percy-Smith, B. and Thomas, N. (eds.) *A handbook of children's participation*. United Kingdom, Routledge, p 287-290.

Voice of Young People in Care (VOYPIC). (2013) *Do you care? Let's challenge the story for children in care*. Belfast, VOYPIC.

World Bank. (2006) *Development and the next generation. World Development Report 2007*. Washington DC, World Bank.

Yeung, P., Passmore, A and Packer, T. (2012) Examining citizenship participation in young Australian adults: a structural equation analysis. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 15(1), p. 73-98.

Youthnet. (2003) *SHOUT. The needs of young people in Northern Ireland who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender*. Bangor, Department of Education.

Zeldin, S., Camino, L., & Calvert, M. (2003). Toward an understanding of youth in community governance: Policy priorities and research directions. *Social Policy Report*, 17(3), p. 3-6.

UNESCO Centre

Multidisciplinary Centre
for Research on Children and Youth



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



UNESCO Chair in Education for Pluralism,
Human Rights and Democracy
Northern Ireland

Contact Details:

UNESCO Centre
School of Education
Ulster University
Coleraine
BT52 1SA
Northern Ireland

Phone
+44 (0)28 7012 3593

Fax
+44 (0)28 7012 3021

Email
unescocentre@ulster.ac.uk

www.ulster.ac.uk/unescocentre

The authors are responsible for the choice and presentation of views contained in this report and for opinions expressed therein, which are not necessarily those of UNESCO and do not commit the Organisation.